Application for Reading Excellence Act Funds

Vermont Department of Education

May 7, 1999

Table of Contents:

Part II : Budget Form and Information

Cost Center	Year 1	
	LEA	**TAG**
1. Personnel:		
Project Manager (.75 FTE): salary	$20,000	$10,(
Administrative Assistant (.25 FTE): salary		$7,(
2. Fringe Benefits:		
Health, Dental, FICA, Life, Disability (30% of salary)	$6,000	$5,
3. Travel: Project Manager (6,000 miles/year @ .31/mile)	$930	$
4. Equipment: (laptop for Project Manager)		$2,
5. Supplies: (training, advertising)	$1,000	$2,(
6. Contractual:		
External Evaluation (1.9% of total project)	$9,310	$9,
Subgrants: LEAs (80% of total grant)	$804,373	
Subgrants: TAG		$121,
7. Construction		
8. Other		
9. Total Direct Costs	$841,613	$157,
10. Total Indirect Costs: (8% of all but subgrants)	$2,979	$2,
11. Training Stipends		
12. Total Costs	$844,592	$160,

Local Reading Improvement (Section 2255):

✓ Three percent ($30,164) of the total amount requested in years 1 & 2 will support the administration of the project (excluding Section 2256). These funds will be used to hire and support a Project Manager (.5 FTE) to support the technical assistance, selection, and ongoing professional development of the Local Reading Improvement subgrantees in years 1 & 2. The project will pay for the salary and benefits of Project Manager based on the usual and customary salary and benefits established under the state personnel contract as well as the travel and supplies necessary to visit participating LEAs and provide technical assistance and training.

✓ Eighty percent ($804,373) of the total amount requested will be subgranted to LEAs to implement Local Reading Improvement projects.

Tutorial Assistance (Section 2256): Fifteen percent ($150,820) of the total grant will support Tutorial Assistance subgrants:

✓ The Project Manager and administrative assistant will each dedicate .25 FTE to support the Tutorial Assistance subgrants program in both years 1 & 2. The project will pay for the salary and benefits of these personnel based on the usual and customary salary and benefits established under the state personnel contract. These staff will solicit, select and monitor the performance of participating LEAs and tutorial assistance programs. In year 1, the project will pay for a laptop computer for the Project Manager. In years 1 & 2, the project will provide $2,000 for the training and advertising necessary to implement the Tutorial Assistance subgrants. In years 1 & 2, the project will support travel expenses for the Project Manager to visit the participating schools and programs.

✓ Tutorial Assistance subgrants (Year 1: $121,525; Year 2: $123,793) will be awarded to eligible LEAs after the grant review/selection process.

Evaluation (Section 2259): In year 1, $18,620 (1.9% of the total amount requested) will purchase the services of an external contractor to conduct the required state evaluations and performance reports.

Indirect Costs: Eight percent of all direct costs excluding the amount reserved for subgrants to LEAs (Year 1: $5,894; Year 2: $5,726). Vermont has a negotiated indirect cost rate of 18%.

Reading Excellence Act
Part III Narrative

This narrative section of the REA application will first include a Preface, followed by a brief Project Description Summary. Then, the sections which follow (A- F) will describe Vermont's proposed REA activities as they relate to the scoring criteria to be used in rating the application. Finally, Part IV (Appendices) will include the Project Director's Resume and the response to GEPA's Section 427. A letter from Governor Howard Dean concerning his participation with VT's Reading-Literacy Partnership is also included, but under separate cover, with the assurances and application cover page.

Preface

> *The Reading Excellence Act offers a prime opportunity for Vermont's State Education Agency to accelerate efforts to ensure reading success and prevent reading difficulties. In Vermont, we already know that 24 % of our second graders do not meet state standards for reading accuracy and comprehension. That's also true of 21% of our fourth graders, in the area of basic understanding in reading, and 37% of our fourth graders in reading analysis and interpretation. In some schools the percentages are significantly lower. The need is clear, and the REA program will help us accomplish two things:*
>
> 1) *Provide the "leverage" of significant support for eligible schools (that meet the criteria of high poverty and /or Title 1 school improvement status) who are willing to implement highly effective, comprehensive and intensive programs that prevent reading failure and ensure reading success;*
> 2) *Demonstrate to teachers, administrators, policy makers, parents and the public, that real change , although not easy, is possible – even with schools that traditionally might be thought of as less apt to make a difference for students. Such demonstrations will be powerful motivators for others undertaking reform in the area of early reading support.*
>
> *Vermont's REA program should act as a "spark plug" for targeted and interested schools to "beat the odds" against them by strategically using highly effective instruction, clear standards, and ongoing assessments. We expect to use REA to strengthen teachers' clear understandings in all of the areas of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, fluency, comprehension and motivation); to induce schools' use of research-based instructional programs and professional development; and to prompt better use of assessment information and other indicators to monitor change in student achievement and implementation of reading programs.*

Project Description Summary: Accelerating Success for Vermont's Early Readers

"Accelerating Success for Vermont's Early Readers" will operate as a two year, multi-site project to significantly improve the reading practices and student performance in several of the state's most-at-risk schools. The State Department of Education, in collaboration with the Legislature, other key partners and agencies, has developed a "comprehensive plan for early reading success" to ensure that every child in Vermont reads competently by the end of third grade. The plan was approved by the State board of Education in 1998. This year, VT's Commissioner of Education has designated the group that developed that plan as the "Reading-Literacy Partnership" for VT.

Currently the plan, which is now named "VT Reads" is being updated by a Steering Committee, which has been formed to provide oversight to the implementation of the plan toward its goals. The Reading Excellence program will serve as a critical strategy in the plan. Upon receiving news of the REA award, the plan will be further modified to include it explicitly. The Steering Committee will work to promote close coordination between VT's REA program and other resources and initiatives in the state, such as library programs, a new Family Literacy consortium being planned, the action planning process (which all VT schools are required to undertake), Regional Reading Success Centers, (which include a new initiative to reduce unnecessary referrals to special education), and others.

Because Vermont is such as small state, its REA project will be manageable. Project staff will include a Project Manager and one part-time administrative assistant: both will be members of the state's multi-agency, statewide Early Literacy Team, which has been operating for two years and plays a key role in the implementation of the comprehensive plan.

Following public notice, immediate work will begin to encourage eligible LEAs to apply. Project staff, along with members of the VT Reads REA Steering Committee, will initiate the process of disseminating information, providing (and/or brokering) training for REA applicants, and providing a variety of resources (including technological) to support LEAs in the process of application. Baseline data will be collected as well, partly by the SEA's project staff, but also by the independent evaluator. A critical aspect of training will involve reviewing and discussing the criteria by which Local Reading Improvement grants will be evaluated.

By January, 2000, LEAs which are interested in submitting proposals to the SEA will do so. Their local reading improvement grant proposals (RIPs) will then be reviewed against the specified criteria by members of the VT Reads REA Steering Committee (after members of the review team receive careful training in the review process). Following the RIP review process, the Tutorial Assistance grants proposals will be reviewed as well, using a similar process.

Based on a review of our LEAs' data concerning poverty data and Title 1 school improvement status, it appears that approximately 16 LEAs (out of a total of 60) would be eligible to submit applications. While the number of LEAs who will eventually choose to apply is unknown at this time, we expect 6-10 applications from LEAs for Local Reading Improvement grants, and four-six Tutorial Assistance Grant applications. Given the total amount of federal funds requested and the magnitude of the task to be undertaken , we plan to keep the number of actual grants to be awarded relatively small (perhaps 4-6 local Reading Improvement subgrants and 2-3 Tutorial Assistance subgrants) to ensure that adequate resources are available for local projects to achieve success and that adequate technical assistance can be provided by the SEA as well.

Needless to say, accelerating success in early reading is not simply about financial resources, however. The very structure of the Reading Excellence Act Program carries with it key elements, which are backed up by research, to maximize the likelihood of significantly reducing early reading failure. Among the most powerful of these factors are coherent reading programs which address all of the key components of reading, needs-based, continuous professional development and ongoing monitoring through assessments aligned to key expectations and standards (Preventing Reading Difficulties, 1998). These and other factors (such as quality of implementation) are critical elements of Vermont's local reading improvement grant application (included in this application), and will be monitored closely by project staff and members of the VT Reads REA Steering Committee. In addition, evaluation information will be collected independently by the external evaluator.

VT's REA Tutorial Assistance Programs will provide important supplements to the work being undertaken through the local reading improvement subgrants. LEAs will ensure that both school -based TAG subgrants and projects using independent providers will be awarded, so that parents of students who need extra assistance are afforded a meaningful choice of providers.

Evaluation of Vermont's REA project will be based primarily on student performance as measured by Vermont's standards-based early reading assessment, the Vermont-Developmental Reading Assessment. This individually administered, audiotaped, performance assessment which is part of Vermont's comprehensive assessment system, is administered to all second graders in the state each May.

Results report the percentages of students across five levels of proficiency, who demonstrate acceptable performance in reading and comprehending grade-appropriate text. For students to "achieve with honors" at least adequate fluency is expected as well. VT's REA program will use this information, disaggregated according to relevant subgroups, to determine the relative success of local reading improvement programs in promoting early reading success (increasing the percentage of students at or above the standard) and in preventing early reading failure (reducing the percentages of students in the two lowest levels of proficiency).

VT's REA project will also use teacher surveys (selected questions from "learning opportunity surveys" which are completed by teachers as part of the comprehensive assessment system) to investigate the frequency with which teachers in REA schools are using research-based practices. Because all schools have been involved in the state comprehensive assessment program for two years now, there are good possibilities for interesting analysis of the data comparing REA implementation years with baseline years.

A. Significance: Extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve or expand services that address the needs of the target population.

Vermont's Reading Excellence Project will make a difference because it will build local capacity to prevent reading failure and will simultaneously accelerate a critical element of our systemic reform efforts: local action planning based on student performance data. In addition, because of Vermont's small size and "laboratory-like" context, the VT REA project should provide a powerful demonstration of success.

Building local capacity.
Vermont's REA project will build local capacity because of several key factors. First, it will provide a strong and sustained "dose" of content-based professional development in the discipline of reading. To begin with, the local reading improvement project application itself, (including the rubrics for rating applications), prompts intentional and highly focused attention to all areas of early reading.

During training, there will be a strong emphasis on making sure that plans for local reading improvement adequately address all of the key components of reading. We expect to make strong use of resources already present to assist in the training. For example, we have a strong partner in the Stern Center for Language and Learning, an independent professional development provider, has already successfully conducted extensive professional development as well as research in the state concerning phonological/phonemic awareness, decoding and fluency.

We will also tap the expertise of faculty at the University of Vermont, who have done extensive research in the area of reading comprehension, and the VT Center for the Book, VT Dept. of Libraries and VT Council on the Humanities in the area of reading motivation. All of these partners have already worked closely with the VT Department of Education in the development and implementation of the state's comprehensive plan for early reading success and other collaborations, and have taken part in a review of the plan in light of recommendations from Preventing Reading Difficulties. In addition to the resources named above, staff from the VT State Colleges and Vermont's Americorps-VISTA America Reads program, along with EvenStart staff and others will assist with the training for those applying for Tutorial Assistance subgrants.

Accelerating local action planning.
VT's REA project will accelerate the action planning process already required of VT's schools under Act 60, our recently passed educational reform legislation. Under this legislation all schools and communities are required to analyze their student performance data and other relevant indicators, engage in a rigorous action planning process to set performance targets, select and implement strategies and communicate results publicly. Schools that fail to make progress in increasing percentages of students who meet the standards are identified as "in need of technical assistance", with more serious consequences possible if progress continues to be minimal. At the current time four schools have been identified in a first tier (most "in need of technical assistance") with an additional twenty-five identified in a second (less in need) tier.

Needless to say, this action planning process has necessitated extensive training around the state, and has captured the attention of educators and community members alike. The REA project will fit very well with VT's action planning process since the goals are perfectly congruent. VT schools are now used to closely examining their student performance data, disaggregating it to more closely analyze the data for possible patterns among subgroups, setting targets and identifying strategies to boost student performance.

The "missing link" for many VT schools, however, has been to effectively use research to select and carefully implement highly effective strategies. The REA project will, for targeted schools, fill that niche, while at the same time providing the state of Vermont with a "pilot" model for use with a broader range of schools.

Readiness to provide demonstrations of success in a laboratory-like, reform-friendly, context.
Finally, the VT REA project will make a difference because Vermont has the readiness to do well. Vermont's small size makes coordination not only possible but also necessary. Vermont has the smallest class size in the nation, and has above-average per-pupil spending. The slogan "it takes a village to raise a child" makes perfect sense in Vermont, which functions very much like a village. To accomplish almost anything, coordination with other key players is essential. For example, the development of materials and training for the recently held action planning sessions was accomplished jointly by the Vermont State Colleges, the University of Vermont, and the Department of Education – partly because it was simply the right thing to do, but also because no one partner has the full expertise or resources to accomplish the task effectively.

Because of its positive history with educational reform, VT is a relatively "reform-friendly" site. VT has made a serious commitment to educational reform, with almost a decade of consistency in its goals ("success for all Vermont students; no exceptions, no excuses)" and general strategies (strengthening/aligning standards, instruction and assessments to achieve both equity and excellence). Vermont is also now poised to begin a major new comprehensive professional development initiative.

Although there is still some dissatisfaction with the financial aspects of Act 60,VT's educational reform legislation, the educational components have been generally accepted. Because the student performance data from the state's comprehensive assessment system has been widely publicized, Vermonters, in general, recognize the need for systemic reform – particularly in an area as critical as early reading.

B. Quality of project design :

In order to understand the quality of VT 's REA project design, it is important to review the applications and rating criteria for Vermont's local reading improvement subgrants and Tutorial assistance subgrants.   First, the local reading improvement project subgrant application will be displayed (beginning on the next page) ; the rubrics to be used by reviewers follow. Then, the Tutorial Assistance Project subgrant application will come next, followed by the checklist/rating scale to be used by the reviewers of those subgrants.

Reading Excellence Act Program

Local Education Agency Subgrant Application

COVER PAGE

Part 1: LEA (Supervisory Union/ District) Information

Supervisory Union/District Name: _____

Contact Person: _____ **Email:** _____

Mailing Address: _____

_____

Telephone: _____

School (s) proposed as REA participants:

_____   _____

_____   _____

Assurances (please initial):

____**The LEA will limit use of funds to children from eligible schools.**

Contact Person's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Superintendent's Signature:

_____ **Date:** _____

Below: For VT Dept. of Education Use ONLY:

Proposal Points: _____

Status: ___ Approved

___ Not approved

Date: _____

Section #; Area to describe	Maximum Points; estimated (max.) pages needed to respond	Directions
1. Description of Comprehensive Reading Improvement Program that addresses key areas of reading, and is based on scientifically based research	34 pts. 4 pages	Please describe the comprehensive reading improvement program to be implemented or expanded at the eligible school(s). (Note: If different reading improvement programs are being planned for different schools, please describe them separately.) This description of the program should include the following six component areas * skills and knowledge to understand how phonemes (speech sounds) are connected to print (phonological awareness) * ability to decode unfamiliar words * ability to read fluently * sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster comprehension * development of appropriate active reading strategies to construct meaning from print (early reading strategies and comprehension strategies) * development and maintenance of a motivation to read and should also, for each component OR for the entire program , provide evidence of research that supports the reading improvement program/component the school is selecting : Please address: • theory/research foundation behind the component/program • evaluation-based evidence of effectiveness of the program as previously implemented • past implementation of program/component • replicability of the program/component - (Note: Schools may select ONE reading improvement program to address all six areas, or may select several different programs. A school's program may, but does not

		need to, include commercially published programs. An optional form is provided for this description at the end of this application.
2. Selection of Reading Improvement Program(s)	4 pts 1- 2 pages	Please describe the process by which the reading improvement program(s) to be implemented will be selected, including information about: • the process by which needs have been /will be assessed at the school (student needs and program/staff needs) • the process and criteria by which programs are to be reviewed and selected
3. Implementation of the Reading Improvement Program	3 pts. 1 page	Please describe the planned process for implementing the Reading Improvement Program • with all academic teachers, and other staff as appropriate, at the school • and, where appropriate, with parents
4. Technical assistance from experts	3 pts 1 page	Please describe the planned technical assistance to be received from experts familiar with the reading program(s) selected , or with their implementation

5. Professional Development for classroom teachers, other instructional staff	10 pts 2 pages	Please describe the professional development planned for classroom teachers and other instructional staff, including how it is based on scientifically based research, and: • content (about what?) • source/providers (who?) • format (Workshops? Mentoring?) • frequency, duration, intensity (how often, when?)
6. Curriculum and Supporting Materials, if needed	4 points 1 page	Please describe the curriculum and supporting materials to be implemented for the components listed in Section #1. You may attach this at the end of your application, if you wish, but please identify it as section #6 – Curriculum.
7. Family Literacy services (based on Even Start Family Literacy model)	6 points 1-2 pages	Please describe how the following will be addressed: • Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children • Training for parents on how to be the primary teachers for their children, and full partners in their children's' education • Parent literacy training that leads to economic self-

		sufficiency
		• Age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school, and life experiences
8. Kindergarten Transition programs And/or services for students having difficulty with reading skills	5 points 1 page	Please describe planned kindergarten transition programs or services (before, during, or after kindergarten) for students having difficulty with the development of reading – or at risk of having difficulty
9.. Support Programs (before school, after school, summer, etc.), including tutors	5 points 1 page	Please describe support programs planned for students who need extra help – to be provided before school, after school, on weekends, or during non-instructional periods of the school day, or summer. Include information about the training (using scientifically based research) and supervision of these individuals.
10. Promotion of reading and library programs	5 points; 1 page	Please describe how reading and library programs that provide access to engaging reading materials will be promoted.
11. Coordination of programs .	4 points 1 page	Please describe how the funds for the reading improvement program, library programs, and other literacy-related programs (e.g., Adult Basic Education, America Reads, special education programs, local curriculum development initiatives) will be coordinated at the school so that duplication is avoided and program effectiveness is increased.
12.* Involvement of Parents, Tutors and Early Childhood Providers	7 points 1-2 pages	Please describe how parents, tutors, and early childhood providers will be involved with the reading improvement project to enhance children's' fluency.
12. Special attention to children who might be referred for special education, or to those evaluated but not eligible	5 points 1 page	Please describe how services will be provided to ensure that children who might be at risk of being referred to special education, or who have been evaluated but were not identified as having a disability will benefit to the maximum extent possible.
14. Providing information to parents about teacher qualifications in reading	2 points ½ page	Please describe the process to be used to provide information to parents about teacher qualifications in reading
15. Partnership with a community based organization(s) and a variety of perspectives	3 points; ½ page	Please describe existing and/or planned partnerships with one or more community-based organizations (America Reads, Church groups, Community Service Clubs such as Rotary, RSVP programs, etc.) in implementing the reading improvement programs. Also, please describe how input from a variety of perspectives (recipients of services, teachers, parents, business, a variety of disciplinary/professional fields,

		etc.) will be included in the local project.

Optional Form for Reading Improvement Program Description: Section #1

(reduced-size format)

(Note: LEAs may prefer to provide this information in narrative form….)

Reading Improvement Program Component	Description of what will be provided for students, as appropriate for individual needs	How the component has been supported by research (see "program completeness/effectiveness rubric" for guidance)
1. Skills and knowledge to understand how phonemes (speech sounds) are connected to print		
2. Ability to decode unfamiliar words		
3. Ability to read fluently		
4. Sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster comprehension		
5. Development of appropriate active reading strategies to construct meaning from print (early reading strategies and comprehension strategies		
6. Development and maintenance of a motivation to read		

RIP Rubric for Reviewers

School Name: _____Reviewer Initials:_____Program or component _____

Table A1. Program Completeness/Effectiveness Rubric				
Evidence	**Criteria: Outstanding/Most Rigorous (20-30 points)**	**Criteria: Acceptable/Somewhat Rigorous (15-20 points)**	**Criteria: Bridging (10-15 points)**	**Criteria: Marginal (0-10 points)**
Completeness	Documentation clearly specifies how the major components of reading (including phonological awareness, decoding, fluency, sufficient background information and vocabulary, early reading and comprehension strategies and motivation) will be addressed to meet the individual needs of children to assure reading success. All of the components are adequately addressed.	Documentation specifies how the major components of reading (including phonological awareness, decoding, fluency, sufficient background information and vocabulary, early reading and comprehension strategies and motivation) will be addressed to meet the individual needs of children to assure reading success. Most of the components are adequately addressed.	Documentation specifies how the major components of reading (including phonological awareness, decoding, fluency, sufficient background information and vocabulary, early reading and comprehension strategies and motivation) will be addressed to meet the individual needs of children to assure reading success. Some components are adequately addressed.	Documentation provides some general information about how the major components of reading will be addressed.
Theory/ research Foundation	The program explains the theory behind its design, references the scientific literature, and elucidates why the program improves students' ability to read.	The program states the theory behind its design explaining how the program's components reinforce one another to improve students' ability to read.	The program explains the theory behind its design and describes how the components will improve students' ability to read.	The program explains the theory behind its design.

Evaluation-based evidence of effectiveness	Student reading gains have been shown using experimental and control groups created through large-scale random assignment or carefully matched comparison groups.	Student reading gains have been shown using between or within-school comparisons.	Student reading gains have been shown for a single school and a process has been identified to use for between or within-school comparisons.	Student reading gains have been shown for a single school.
	The program has produced educationally significant pre and post intervention student reading gains as reliably measured using appropriate assessments.	The program has produced student reading gains relative to district means or other comparison groups using appropriate assessment instruments.	The program has produced student reading gains or is in the process of using appropriate assessment instruments for the purposes of comparison.	The program has produced improvements on other indicators of student reading achievement, e.g. amount of time students spend reading outside of school or student engagement.
	The student reading achievement gains have been sustained for three or more years.	The student reading achievement gains have been sustained for two years.	The student reading achievement gains have been sustained for one year.	Other indicators of improved student reading performance have been sustained for one or two years.
	The student reading gains have been confirmed through independent, third party evaluation.	The program has been evaluated by a state, district, or school evaluation team.	A process is in place for the program to be evaluated by a state, district or school evaluation team.	The program has been evaluated by its developers.

Implementation	The program has been fully implemented in multiple sites for more than 3 years.	The program has been fully implemented in the original site(s) for more than three years.	The program has been fully implemented in the original pilot site(s) for more than one or less than three years.	The program has been fully implemented in the original pilot site(s) for a minimum of one school year.
	Documentation is available that clearly specifies the program's implementation requirements and procedures, including staff development, curriculum, instructional methods, materials, assessments, and costs.	Documentation is available that attempts to describe the implementation requirements of the program including staff development, curriculum, instruction methods, materials, and assessments.	Documentation is available that partially describes the implementation requirements of the program including staff development, curriculum and assessments.	Documentation is available that provides a general description of the program's requirements.
	The costs of full implementation are clearly specified, including whether or not the costs of materials, staff development, additional personnel etc. are included in the program's purchase price.	The costs of full implementation have been estimated, including whether or not the costs of materials, staff development, additional personnel, etc. are included in the program's purchase price.	The costs of partial implementation have been estimated, along with whether or not the costs of materials, staff development, additional personnel etc. are included.	Documentation is available that provides general information about the program's costs.

	The program has been implemented in schools with characteristics similar to the target school: same grade levels, similar size, similar poverty levels, similar student demographics such as racial, ethnic, and language minority composition.	The program has been successfully implemented in at least one school with characteristics similar to the target school.	The program is in the process of being implemented in one school with at least one characteristic similar to the target school.	Information on grade level, size, student demographics, poverty level, and racial, ethnic and language minority concentration are available for the schools where the program has been implemented.
Replicability	The program has been replicated successfully in a wide range of schools and districts, e.g. urban, rural, suburban.	The program has been replicated in a number of schools or districts representing diverse settings.	Full replication of the program has been accomplished in several schools.	Full replication of the program is being initiated in several schools.
	The replication sites have been evaluated, demonstrating significant student reading gains comparable to those achieved in the pilot site(s).	Some replication sites have been evaluated, demonstrating positive gains in student reading ability.	Some replication sites are in the process of being evaluated to determine what gains in student reading ability have been achieved.	Promising initial results are available from the replication sites.

Describe the selection process of the reading improvement program(s) to be implemented.			
Outstanding (8-10 points)	Acceptable (6-7 points)	Bridging (4-5 points)	Marginal (0-3 points)
• Needs assessment includes analyses of student needs and program/staff needs. • Process, criteria and rationale for which programs were	• The process by which needs were assessed at the school are clearly documented. • Process and criteria for which programs were reviewed and	• Needs assessment process includes student needs and program/staff needs. • Process and criteria by which programs were reviewed and	• Needs assessment process includes student needs or program/staff needs. • Process and criteria by which programs were reviewed and

reviewed and selected are specifically documented.	selected are specifically documented.	selected are adequately documented.	selected are generally documented.
Comments:			
Points Awarded:			

Describe the process for implementing the Reading Improvement Program.			
Outstanding (8-10 points)	Acceptable (6-7 points)	Bridging (4-5 points)	Marginal (0-3 points)
• All key school staff are active participants of the implementation plan. • Parents have had several opportunities to learn about the implementation process.	• Key school staff are active participants of the implementation plan. • All parents have had the opportunity to learn about the implementation process.	• Some school staff are active participants of the implementation plan. • Some parents have had the opportunity to learn about the implementation process.	• A few school staff are active participants of the implementation plan. • No opportunity for parents to learn about the implementation process is documented.
Comments			
Points Awarded:			

Describe the planned technical assistance to be received from experts.			
Outstanding (8-10 points)	Acceptable (6-7 points)	Bridging (4-5 points)	Marginal (0-3 points)
• The school has a specific plan to utilize high quality external technical assistance and support.	• The school plans to utilize external support. The details of the plan are not yet worked out. • It is not clear whether the	•	• It is not clear whether or how the school plans to utilize technical assistance and support.

• The technical assistance provider is experienced and highly qualified to provide the support.	provider has the expertise to provide the technical assistance and support needed.		• The technical assistance provider does not have the expertise with the reading program(s).

Comments:

Points Awarded:

Describe the professional development for classroom teachers and other instructional staff.			
Outstanding (8-10 points)	Acceptable (6-7 points)	Bridging (4-5 points)	Marginal (0-3 points)
• Professional development plans are varied, of high quality and reflect best practices (modeling, coaching, etc.). • Content, sources, format and frequency are specifically addressed.	• Professional development plans are high quality and reflect best practices (modeling, coaching, etc.). • Content, sources, format and frequency are adequately addressed.	• Professional development plans lack variety, are not of high quality or do not reflect best practices. • Content, sources, format and frequency are somewhat addressed.	• Professional development plans are incomplete. • Content, sources, format or frequency are not adequately addressed.

Comments:

Points Awarded:

Describe the curriculum and supporting materials to be implemented.			
Outstanding (8-10 points)	Acceptable (6-7 points)	Bridging (4-5 points)	Marginal (0-3 points)
• Specific curriculum and supporting materials have been	• Specific curriculum and supporting materials have been	• Specific curriculum or supporting materials has been	• Specific curriculum or supporting materials has not

identified in great detail for all five component areas. • Research that supports each of the five component areas is clearly evident in the documentation.	identified adequately for all five component areas. • Research that supports each of the five component areas is adequately documented.	identified adequately for some of the component areas. • Some evidence that research supports the component areas is documented.	been adequately identified for the five component areas. • Research evidence to support the component areas is missing.

Comments:

Points Awarded:

Describe how family literacy services will be implemented.			
Outstanding (8-10 points)	Acceptable (6-7 points)	Bridging (4-5 points)	Marginal (0-3 points)
• There is a specific and detailed plan for implementing all aspects of the family literacy services. • Ongoing family literacy services are included in the implementation plan.	• There is an adequate plan for implementing all aspects of the family literacy services. • The school plans to offer ongoing family literacy services. The details of the plan are not yet worked out.	• There is an adequate plan for implementing some aspects of the family literacy services.	• It is not clear how all aspects of the family literacy services will be implemented. • Family literacy services plans are incomplete.

Comments:

Points Awarded:

:

Describe planned kindergarten transition programs or services for students having difficulty with reading skills.			
Outstanding (8-10 points)	Acceptable (6-7 points)	Bridging (4-5 points)	Marginal (0-3 points)

• Planned transition programs for kindergarten children having difficulty/at risk of having difficulty with reading are well documented. • Transition programs are in place for before, during and after kindergarten to better meet the needs of individual children.	• Planned transition programs for kindergarten children having difficulty/at risk of having difficulty are adequately documented. • Sometransition programs are in place for before, during and after kindergarten to better meet the needs of individual children.	• Planned transition programs for kindergarten children having difficulty/at risk of having difficulty are somewhat documented. • Transition programs are planned for before, during or after kindergarten to better meet the needs of individual children.	• Planned transition programs for kindergarten children are lacking in terms of support for reading difficulties. • Plans for transition programs are incomplete.

Comments:

Points Awarded:

Describe support programs for students who need extra help.			
Outstanding (8-10 points)	Acceptable (6-7 points)	Bridging (4-5 points)	Marginal (0-3 points)
• Planned programs for children needing extra help in reading are well documented. • Programs are in place for before, during the day, after school, weekends or the summer to better meet the needs of individual children.	• Planned programs for children needing extra help in reading are adequately documented. • Some programs are in place for before, during the day, after school, weekends or the summer to better meet the needs of individual children.	• Planned programs for children needing extra help in reading are somewhat documented. • Programs are planned for before, during the day, after school, weekends or the summer to better meet the needs of individual children.	• Planned programs for children needing extra help in reading are lacking. • Plans for programs are incomplete.

Comments:
Points Awarded:

Describe how reading and library programs will promote access to engaging reading materials.			
Outstanding (8-10 points)	Acceptable (6-7 points)	Bridging (4-5 points)	Marginal (0-3 points)
• There is a specific and detailed plan describing all aspects of how reading and library programs will promote access to reading materials. • Ongoing reading and library programs that clearly engage readers are included in the plan.	• There is an adequate plan describing all aspects of how reading and library programs will promote access to reading materials. • The school's plans have begun to be implemented.	• There is an adequate plan that describes some aspects of how the reading and library programs will promote access to reading materials. *. The details of the programs are not yet worked out.	• It is not clear how the reading and library programs will promote access to reading materials. • Reading and library program plans are incomplete.
Comments			
Points Awarded:			

Describe how the literacy programs will be coordinated.			
Outstanding (8-10 points)	Acceptable (6-7 points)	Bridging (4-5 points)	Marginal (0-3 points)
• Clear and specific evidence that parent, business and community have been involved in such a way to avoid duplication of services. • Clear and specific	• Adequate evidence that parent, business and community has been involved in such a way to avoid duplication of services. • Adequate evidence that	• Some evidence of parent, business or community involvement. • Some evidence of parent, business or community coordination.	• Little or no evidence of parent, business or community involvement. • Little or no evidence of parent, business or community coordination.

documentation that program effectiveness has increased due to coordination of services.	program effectiveness has increased due to coordination of services.		
Comments:			
Points Awarded:			

Describe how parents, tutors and early childhood providers will be involved.			
Outstanding (8-10 points)	Acceptable (6-7 points)	Bridging (4-5 points)	Marginal (0-3 points)
• Clear and specific evidence that parents, tutors and early childhood providers have been involved. • Clear and specific documentation that program effectiveness has increased due to parent, tutors and early childhood providers' involvement.	• Adequate evidence that parents, tutors and early childhood providers have been involved. • Adequate evidence that program effectiveness has increased due to parent, tutors and early childhood providers' involvement.	• Some evidence of parent, tutors, and early childhood providers' involvement. • Some evidence of parent, tutors, and early childhood providers' coordination of services.	• Little or no evidence of parent, tutors or early childhood providers' involvement. • Little or no evidence of parent, tutors or early childhood providers' coordination of services.
Comments:			
Points Awarded:			

Describe how services will be provided to make sure that all children's reading needs are being met.			
Outstanding (8-10 points)	Acceptable (6-7 points)	Bridging (4-5 points)	Marginal (0-3 points)
• There is a specific and	• There is an adequate plan	• There is an adequate plan that	• It is not clear how the services

detailed plan describing all aspects of how services will be provided to make sure that all children's reading needs are being met. • An ongoing evaluation of how these services are delivered is included in the plan.	describing all aspects of how services will be provided to make sure that all children's reading needs are being met. • The school plans to have an ongoing evaluation of the process. The details of the process are not yet worked out.	describes some aspects of how services will be provided to make sure that all children's reading needs are being met. • Implementation of how the plan will be evaluated are not yet clear.	will be provided to make sure that all children's reading needs are being met. • Services to be provided are incomplete.
Comments:			
Points Awarded:			

Describe the process to provide information to parents about teacher qualifications in reading.			
Outstanding (8-10 points)	Acceptable (6-7 points)	Bridging (4-5 points)	Marginal (0-3 points)
• The school has a specific plan to inform parents about teacher qualifications.	• The school plans to inform parents about teacher qualifications. The details of the plan are not yet worked out.	• The plans are sketchy. •	• It is not clear whether or how the school plans to inform parents about teacher qualifications.
Comments:			
Points Awarded:			

Describe existing or planned partnerships with community based organizations.			
Outstanding (8-10 points)	Acceptable (6-7 points)	Bridging (4-5 points)	Marginal (0-3 points)

• Clear and specific plan describing existing and planned partnerships with community based organizations. • Clear and specific documentation that program effectiveness has increased due to community-based organizations' involvement.	• Adequate plan describing existing and planned partnerships with community based organizations. • Adequate evidence that program effectiveness has increased due to community-based organizations' involvement.	• Some evidence of existing or planned partnerships with community based organizations.	• Little or no evidence of existing or planned partnerships with community based organizations.

Comments:

Points Awarded:

Reading Excellence Act Program

LEA Tutorial Assistance Grant Project Application

COVER PAGE

Part 1: LEA (Supervisory Union/ District) Information

Supervisory Union/District Name: _____

Contact Person: _____ **Email:** _____

Mailing Address: _____

_____

Telephone: _____

School (s) proposed as REA Tutorial Assistance participants:

_____   _____

_____   _____

Assurances:

_____**The LEA will limit use of funds to children from eligible schools.**

Contact Person's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Superintendent's Signature:

_____ **Date:** _____

Below: For VT Dept. of Education Use ONLY:

Proposal Points: _____   Reviewer : _____

Status: ___ Approved

_____ Not approved

Date: _____

Checklist/Rating Form for REA Tutorial Assistance Grants

Section #; Area to describe	Maximum Points	Directions
1. Criteria and process to be used by LEA to identify eligible Tutorial Assistance providers, programs that addresses key areas of reading and is based on scientifically based research	15 points	Please list the criteria and process to be used in identifying eligible tutorial assistance providers and tutorial assistance programs (both school-based programs and independent tutorial assistance programs). Criteria must include: • record of effectiveness with respect to reading readiness, reading instruction for children in kindergarten through third grade and early childhood as appropriate • convenience of location for children who will be receiving tutorial assistance • ability to provide tutoring in reading using instructional practices based on scientifically based reading research and consistent with reading instructional methods and content used by the school that the child attends.
2. Provision of Choices for Parents	5 points	Please describe the process and procedures by which parents will be informed about the choices for tutorial assistance available to them including: • school-based tutorial assistance programs • at least one independent tutorial assistance program
3. Additional Opportunities for Providing Parents with Information	5 points	Please include a description of how additional opportunities will be given to parents (who initially do not respond) to select a tutorial assistance provider or program
4. Recommending Tutorial Assistance Programs to Parents	5 points	Please include a description of how the LEA will recommend a tutorial assistance provider or tutorial assistance program when a parent asks for assistance
5. Selection process for providing tutorial assistance only to children who have been identified has having difficulty in one or more of the following areas: • phonemic awareness • systematic	10 points	Please describe the selection process for providing tutorial assistance to children who have been identified as having difficulty in one or more of the following areas: • phonemic awareness • systematic phonics • fluency • reading comprehension

phonics • fluency • reading comprehension		
6. Selection process for providing tutorial assistance when there are insufficient funds	5 points	Please describe the process for selecting of children for tutorial assistance programs when there are insufficient funds available to provide help for all eligible children. • Priority must be given to children identified as in need through state and local reading assessments • In cases where children are determined to be equally in need of tutorial assistance use a random selection process
7 . Method of payment paid directly to tutorial assistance providers	10 points	Please describe the method of payment made directly to tutorial assistance providers. The method shall: • contain specific goals and timetables with respect to the performance of the tutorial assistance providers • require the tutorial assistance provider to report to the LEA the provider's performance in meeting such goals and timetables • specify the measurement techniques that will be used to evaluate the performance of the provider • require the provider to meet all applicable Federal, state and local health, safety, and civil rights laws • ensure that the tutorial assistance provided is consistent with the reading instruction and content used by the LEA • contain an agreement by the provider that information regarding the identity of any child eligible or enrolled in the program will not be publicly disclosed without permission of a parent of the child • include the terms of agreement between the provider and the LEA with respect to the provider's purchase and maintenance of adequate general liability insurance • contain provisions with respect to the making of payments to the provider by the LEA
8. Quality of effectiveness of the tutorial assistance	15 points	Please describe the process by which the LEA will assume the quality of effectiveness of the tutorial assistance (supervision and monitoring)
9. Termination of contracts with ineffective or	5 points	Please describe how the termination of contracts with ineffective or unsuccessful tutorial assistance providers will occur

unsuccessful tutorial assistance providers		
10. Providing information about the quality and effectiveness of tutorial assistance providers provided to parents	5 points	Please describe how information concerning the quality and effectiveness of tutorial assistance providers will be provided to any parent who requests it
11. Plans for provision of information and assistance to parents in selection of tutorial assistance provider	5 points	Please describe how information and assistance will be provided to parents in selecting the tutorial assistance provider who is best able to meet the needs of the child
12. Providing information to parents about their child's progress in the tutorial program	10 points	Please describe how you will ensure that information concerning each child's progress will be provided to parents
13. Confidentiality of parents' and children's names	5 points	Please describe how you will ensure that no child's name or parent's name (or personally identifiable information) will be disclosed to any tutorial assistance provider without the written consent of the parents.

Reading Excellence Act Program
LEA Tutorial Assistance Subgrant Grant Project Application
Checklist / Scale for rating applications
1.LEA's criteria for determining eligibility of tutorial assistance providers and programs (15 pts) _____yes, criteria include essential elements (see application for list) _____ most elements included _____ several elements not included, or elements only partially addressed

2. Provision of choices for parents: 10 pts
_____yes, process and procedures clear, plans evident for choices to be offered
_____ plans and procedures need more clarity
_____ choices not evident for parents

3. Additional Opportunities for Providing parents with information: 5 pts
_____yes, opportunities clear
_____no, sufficient opportunities not evident

4. Recommending Tutorial Assistance Programs to Parents: 5 pts
_____yes, description is clear and sufficient
_____partially -- description provided, may not be sufficient
_____no, description not provided

5. Selection process for providing tutorial assistance only to children who have been identified has having difficulty:
 10 pts
 _____yes, selection process evident and clear
_____partially – selection process described, may niot be clear how it limits the provision of services
_____no, selection process not described

6. Selection process for providing tutorial assistance when there are insufficient funds: 5 pts
_____yes, process described
_____no; process not described

7. Method of payment paid directly to tutorial assistance providers: 10 pts
_____yes, method includes essential elements (see application)
_____partially includes essential elements
_____no, does not include all essential elements

8. Procedures for Ensuring Oversight of Quality of effectiveness of the tutorial assistance programs: 10 pts
_____yes, description of procedures is clear
_____partially describes process; perhaps not fully adequate
_____no, oversight not addressed

9. Procedures for termination of contracts with ineffective or unsuccessful tutorial assistance providers: 5 pts
_____yes, procedures clearly described
_____partially described
_____no, does not address

10. Information about the quality and effectiveness of tutorial assistance providers provided to parents: 5 pts

_____yes, plans to provide information are clear

_____plans are described

_____no, does not describe plans

11. Plans to provide information and assistance to parents in selection of tutorial assistance provider: 5 points

_____yes, plans to provide this information/assistance are clear

plans to provide this information/assistance are clear

_____no, does not include plans to provide this information

12. Providing information to parents about their child's progress in the tutorial program:

10 points

_____yes, plans to provide this information/assistance are clear and appropriate

_____plans to provide this information/assistance are included

_____no, does not include plans to provide this information

13. Confidentiality - 5 points

____ assurance are clear concerning confidentiality (see application)

____ assurance are included but not clear

____ assurances not included

Rating Process (for both the local Reading Improvement Grants, and later, the Tutorial Assistance Grants):

By January, 2000, LEAs which are interested in submitting local Reading Improvement Project proposals to the SEA will do so. Their local reading improvement grant proposals (RIPs) will then be reviewed against the specified criteria by members of the VT Reads REA Subcommittee (after these individuals receive systematic , careful training in the review process).

Participation of REA Subcommittee (VT Reads REA subcommittee):

Each subgrant application will be read by at least four raters during Round 1, to "narrow the field". Ratings will then be averaged, unless there is greater than a 15-oiont discrepancy between any two raters. If that is the case, the two raters will re-rate the application in question, with moderation by a "table leader/trainer". Applications with the six – eight highest scores will then be selected as finalists.   Finally, a second round of evaluation by raters who did not initially review the specific applications in question will take place, to determine those that will be granted local REA subgrants.

Following the review process for local Reading Improvement subgrants, the Tutorial Assistance grants proposals will be reviewed as well, using a similar process.

B 1. :The extent to which the proposed project will be coordinated with similar or related efforts, and with other appropriate community, state, and Federal resources.

Vermont's REA project is closely coordinated with current elements of educational reform and several key initiatives, and will serve a helpful, linking function among them.

Standards, Instruction and Assessment.
First of all, the state of Vermont, like a number of other states, has been working hard over the past several years to align standards, instruction and assessment to achieve high performance for all learners. In 1996, after several years of development, the state adopted *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* to delineate high performance expectations for all students and to describe opportunities needed for students to achieve these high standards. VT's standards, however, like those of many other states, only delineate standards and "evidence" at the benchmark years of grades 4, 8 and 12. Local districts and/or schools are expected to use the Framework as a bridge to the development of local standards-based curricula. A key emphasis in the state has been to make the standards open and accessible to students so that they know what is expected of them. Extensive work has been done on the development by teachers, and sharing, of standards-based units of study.

  Around the same time as the Framework was completed, a comprehensive assessment system, which outlined standards-based assessments to provide accountability information as to how students were achieving many of standards, was also adopted. In early 1998, Vermont conducted the first statewide assessments aligned to the *Framework*. In May of 1998 a baseline-year assessment of early reading was conducted across the state. Using the VT-Developmental Reading Assessment (a substantially modified version of the commercially available Developmental Reading Assessment), teachers individually assess every second grader in the state, to determine the degree to which students at the level, are meeting standards related to reading accuracy and comprehension. Further description of the assessment is provided in Section E). The state reports the assessment results to the public and to individual schools through press conferences, newspaper inserts, and the Department of Education's Web site. Schools, in turn, report their own results to parents and to the broader public through newsletters, School Report nights, public meetings, etc. The VT REA project will help participating schools and communities make critical links among these key elements of systemic reform.

Educational Finance/Quality Reform and Action Planning. A recent critical force in VT's educational reform picture has been the Equal Education Act of 1997, or , "Act 60." This reform legislation has altered the way education is funded in Vermont, but also includes a variety of "educational quality" components. Two components are particularly

relevant to VT REA proposal: school-based action planning based on student performance data, and the development of a statewide early reading plan.

Under Act 60, all schools are required to engage in action planning, using the results of student performance assessment, to set goals and targets toward all students achieving high standards. The state also uses the assessments to identify the schools in greatest need of technical assistance. Together, the reporting and identification represent a major step toward systemwide accountability--the single most important key to sustainable, cohesive school improvement.

Effective implementation of such key reform elements has been developing over recent years. The State Department of Education and State Board of Education have worked in partnership with the Legislature, higher education and business to provide the financial and human resources necessary for schools to improve instruction and begin meeting the new expectations. During the last two years, Vermont has also made steady and rapid progress toward a comprehensive statewide system of professional growth that includes the continuous embedded staff development of teachers.

The REA project and VT's action planning process should fit together well, since the goals of the two initiatives are perfectly congruent. VT schools annually examine their student performance data, disaggregate data to look for possible patterns, set targets and identify strategies to boost student performance. The link between setting targets and selecting appropriate strategies is often weak, however. Too often schools identify one or two interventions or activities to pursue, and expect that sustained change will follow. What is often missing is effective use of research to link needs and targets with effective strategies . The REA project will, for targeted schools, fill that niche, while at the same time providing the state of Vermont with a "pilot" model for use with a broader range of schools following the REA project

Early Reading Plan. Vermont's REA project will also fit well with the state's comprehensive plan for early reading success. Act 60, the state's recently passed educational reform law, directed the State Board of Education to develop, in collaboration with others, "a plan for establishing a comprehensive system of services for early education in the first three grades to ensure that all students learn to read by the end of the third grade." The Early Literacy Team of the Vermont Department of Education, working in collaboration with legislators, community members, professionals from elementary education, human services, higher education, adult education, public and school libraries, parents, literacy-related nonprofits, and others, developed the plan, which was approved by the State Board of Education in early 1998. The plan is currently being updated, and a Reading/Literacy Partnership "steering committee" for VT Reads (the title recently given to the early reading initiative) is being formed to provide ongoing leadership and monitoring of the plan's implementation.

Last year the budgeted amount to support the early reading plan was $153,000, with another $150,000 available for early reading challenge grants. At the current time

$600,000 is being requested from the VT Legislature to significantly advance implementation of the plan, and to extend it beyond grade 3 to include the intermediate grade levels.

The early reading plan includes two major sections: recommendations and characteristics of effective programs that support early reading success. The first section clusters the recommendations into four subgroups: Expectations, Standards and Assessments, Training for Professionals and Parents, Learning Opportunities, and Leadership and Partnerships. In all, seventeen recommendations for action are listed.

To provide an overview of the plan, we have listed, for each of the four sections of the plan, one sample recommendation and one or two sample action steps.

- Section 1: Expectations, Standards and Assessments-This area views the ends to be achieved and the vehicles needed to judge the effectiveness of efforts to ensure that all students can read by the end of third grade.
  - Recommendation # 1: Ensure that all K-3 classrooms use high quality, classroom-based assessments at least twice a year to monitor students' development of reading and writing skills, and to guide instruction.
    - action step #2: Expand professional development opportunities in text level reading, phonemic awareness, and early writing assessments.

- Training for Professionals and Parents-This area examines the challenges from the standpoint of training by identifying who needs to know what information and how they should learn it.
  - Recommendation #6: Develop and institute a core training module for those who work with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers about pre-reading and emergent literacy.
    - Action step # 1: Convene knowledgeable providers and others to determine content in developmentally appropriate practices, role of families, language development, progression of emergent literacy skills, phonological awareness, and methods, materials and resources.
    - Action step#2: Require this core module for licensure where appropriate.

- Learning Opportunities-This area details the characteristics of the experiences children should have based on findings from research and driven by state and local standards and data and supported by a wide range of constituencies.
  - Recommendation #8: Promote reading and conversation with all children for at least 20 minutes a day.
    - Action step 8b: conduct statewide public information campaign

- Leadership and Partnerships-This area outlines the individual and collaborative work that needs to be done so that the reading success of children is achieved by grade three.

> ➤ Recommendation # 14: Ensure that superintendents, board members, principals, curriculum directors and others understand and support the necessary elements of early reading success.
>   - ▪ Action step # 14a: Develop and disseminate concise resources about early reading to local school leaders
>   - ▪ Action step #14c: Provide or broker technical assistance about early reading to schools experiencing difficulty helping all students become successful readers. (Note: VT's REA project will significantly build on this action step, in particular.)

The second section of Vermont's comprehensive plan for early reading success describes " Characteristics of Systems that Support Early Reading Success. . Using the same four clusters, this section makes recommendations for a variety of "players" (early childhood agencies/organizations, libraries, schools, etc) to review their practices in order to maximize their impact on early reading success   For example, schools are urged to:

- provide at least 120 minutes of literacy instruction each day
- have a student-teacher ratio of no more than 15:1
- provide balanced reading instruction including phonological and phonemic awareness, work with invented spelling, discussion of high quality literature, etc.
- provide full day kindergarten
- use research-based curricula, including authentic literacy approaches, to reflect the state's standards and learning opportunities.

Community and Family Connections. VT's REA project will also coordinate closely with existing community and family resources and initiatives. In VT, community-based parent education and resource centers are in place and are used by families from all social and economic strata. Parent child centers, Head Start programs, schools, and other multi-service early childhood agencies provide workshops on parenting skills, referral services for child care and other assistance, parent support groups, teen parenting groups, and a wide range of other activities.

Home visiting services are another method of delivering needed information on child development, parenting, health, and community resources to new parents. Any number of agencies, each of which may focus on a comprehensive or a specialized approach to assisting families, may provide home visiting services. State efforts to enhance collaborative planning on regional levels have helped these services become better coordinated, with minimal duplication. Because of this, more and more parents can enter the system at a variety of accessible places, and be confident that they will be connected to the services they need. VT's REA project will foster continuation of this kind of coordination and collaboration though its training, application and monitoring processes.

Other Reading Initiatives. The VT REA project will also be closely coordinated with several other initiatives related to reading. Two years ago, to promote successful school-based efforts and to foster model program development, Early Reading Challenge Grants were awarded to 30 schools/communities. The grants allowed educators and

community members in 30 Vermont communities to envision and implement literacy-related activities that would more than likely not have been possible without the grants. In addition, the structure of the application required representatives of various groups who might not otherwise have convened to come together consider the literacy needs of the community.

Using these modest grants, a number of communities were able to provide essential resources and services for early reading success (such as purchasing appropriate books for summer programs for emergent readers, or initiating training for teachers in strategies to promote phonemic awareness. The program has provided those involved with early reading from around the state to get a broader sense of the scope of the work they are involved in, and to learn from one another. Finally, it has enabled grantees to lay some assessment groundwork that can be used as benchmarks for subsequent literacy efforts. Subsequent challenge grants will likely be restricted to non-REA schools, but we will make sure that information about particularly successful early reading strategies (that have been funded through Early Reading Challenge grants) will be shared with REA applicants.

To foster reading engagement , motivation and listening comprehension, another successful strategy in VT has been the Red Clover Program. This student-centered picture book award program provides a structure for teachers and librarians to work with primary-level youngsters to develop skills in reviewing and critiquing picture books. This program, now entering its 5th year, has been used in almost every school with primary. This program has been particularly successful at fostering engagement and motivation in young readers; it will certainly be among the resources suggested to REA applicants. To fully address the component of motivation, however, most REA applicants will need to add other strategies as well.

Regional Reading Success Centers.
Currently, Vermont is working to establish Regional Reading Success Centers throughout the state. Many communities throughout the state do not currently have geographic access to high-quality supports for reading success. Professional development, resource banks and consultation for Vermont professionals and parents are sorely needed.. These centers will have three branches:

- one (branch A) will focus on reading supports for the general population: providing and disseminating resources to schools, parents, and community groups for early support, teaching and learning from birth-grade eight;
- a second branch (B) will focus on prevention: providing or brokering professional development for early intervention components: e.g., training in kindergarten phonological awareness programs such as Benita Blachman's, Reading Recovery in first grade, Early Intervention in Reading, etc. Training in using early literacy assessments will be part of this branch as well.
- A third branch (C) will focus on providing intensive, wrap-around support to schools that demonstrate significant challenges in meeting state standards for early reading performance. This branch has recently received federal funding from the Office of Special Education, and will begin start-up in 1999-2000. This branch will

particularly focus on reducing the percentage of students who are incorrectly or unnecessarily referred for special education evaluations or services. Through this project the state plans to work very closely with higher education across colleges and universities, as well as other providers, to provide multi-year supports to these schools so they can develop a comprehensive program to increase the likelihood of all students succeeding in early reading.

VT's REA project will closely coordinate with the Reading Success Centers in two key ways. First, the resources and professional development available in Branches A and B will also be available to schools participating in local reading improvement projects. Second, there will be clear communication and close coordination to ensure that schools eligible for REA grants have all relevant information about the REA grants so they can make informed choices as to whether or not to apply. Schools that participate in the REA project will not take part in Branch C of the Reading Success Center.

B 2 : The extent to which the proposed project design reflects up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice.

Vermont's REA project is based on current, sound, scientifically based research. Its design involves accelerating the reading performance of students in at-risk schools by supporting the systemic application -- at both the student and teacher level -- of clear standards and expectations, high-quality instruction,, and appropriate, regular assessments. The project will use a systemic, multi-year approach, with initial, uniform training, followed by regular technical assistance and support to improve reading performance.

A systemic approach to preventing early reading failure is significantly more effective than approaching the issue from only one perspective or angle. Systemic efforts involving alignment of standards, assessment and instruction have more staying power than splinter efforts (National Reading Council, 1998) ;there is no "quick fix" (Allington and Cunningham, 1996). Expectations for teachers, administrators and tutorial assistance providers will be communicated clearly and repeatedly clearly through "up-front" training, through follow up VIT sessions and accessible technology (web site, email).

Clear standards, high quality instruction/learning opportunities, and clear assessments linked to standards: this trio of systemic reform elements form the basis of Vermont's REA project design. Often these reform elements are pursued without specific content, however. In the case of VT's REA grant, current research-based information about early reading (from, for example, Preventing Reading Difficulties, CIERA, NAEP studies) will be combined with a focus on standards, assessment and instruction/learning opportunities to help a number of eligible and willing (but at-risk) schools to really make a difference in early reading.

VT's REA project aims to 1) make expectations for research-based reading improvements clear to staff from participating schools (standards), 2) prompt adoption of

research-based instructional programs, highly effective strategies/professional development, and other key factors to boost success across all of the major components of reading; and 3) monitor progress through collection and analysis of annual statewide student assessment results for reading at the end of grade 2, and teacher surveys focusing on instructional practices.

Vermont's project design involves a clear emphasis and intentional focus on the analysis and planning that needs to bridge the gap between assessment and instruction/ strategies. However, too often, analysis and planning have been either shortchanged or ignored, in haste to get to the "action". At the program level, without analysis and planning, there is often a rush to select new materials ("buy the new reading series and get it into teachers' hands quickly"), add a special project ("have a special "Reading Fair"), or jump on a new inservice bandwagon (the "Reading Stars" Workshop) without carefully analyzing available data and other indicators, and without reviewing the research base being the "action".

At the student level, this sort of shortchanging clearly has very serious effects. In many classrooms assessment results (both standardized/accountability results and classroom-based assessments) are simply filed and are rarely considered, while virtually all students receive the same kind of instruction/support. Or, only one kind of information is used, and decisions are made hastily. Making and taking the time to analyze assessment information and other indicators and research is a critical part of being truly professional . In addition to time, though, teachers need practice and skilled support in using assessment information well, and systematically exploring research-based options. Some of the commercial programs that REA schools will select will provide some support for this critical area, but in general, professional development is needed to help teachers perform this essential step in the teaching-learning process.

By explicitly focusing on the important linkages between assessment and instruction/learning opportunities, the REA program will target a critical reform area that is widely discussed, but often inadequately addressed: using assessment information to plan instruction. Schools will be prompted to use assessment information to adjust instruction in at least two ways, as they conduct their needs assessment while drafting their REA application, and also annually, as they consider the results form the VT-DRA. School staff will be supported in raising questions, considering factors that might be affecting progress, and planning adjustments. REA-sponsored professional development will particularly focus on this critical area – to supplement professional development activities planned and implemented at the school level.

B 3. The extent to which the proposed project is based upon a specific research design, and the quality and appropriateness of that design, including scientific rigor of the studies involved.

The research design to be used in VT's REA project is twofold. It will include both a study of student performance in reading (as measured by gain scores concerning student

outcomes), as well as a longitudinal process evaluation concerning possible changes in teacher practice and school implementation at the classroom and school levels. Since Vermont has implemented an early reading assessment (as part of its statewide comprehensive assessment system) for every child at the end of second grade since 1998, two years of data ('98 and '99) will be available to provide a strong baseline for comparisons.

The following research questions will be asked:
I. Regarding Student Performance/Outcomes:
a) To what degree do scores, (differences between pre/post assessments of REA students' reading accuracy and comprehension) change during REA intervention years as compared to before the intervention (baseline)?
b) Are there differences among REA sites with regards to the above question?
c) What factors do teachers, parents, and administrators identify at the end of the REA project as most supportive of increased student performance, and most challenging? Do these factors vary across sites?

Note: It will be important to disaggregate student performance measures (by gender, SES factors, etc,) and to control for differences between schools and classrooms in terms of such factors.

II. Regarding Teacher Practice
To what degree do teachers in REA schools report shifts in practices connected to the goals of the REA project, as compared to before the REA intervention and as compared to the remainder of the state (teachers in non-REA schools)?
a) To what degree does teacher practice connected to the goals of the REA project vary across sites?
b) What degree of fidelity to the local reading improvement project activities and intensity of tutorial assistance occurred?

III Regarding School Implementation
a) To what degree are high quality family literacy programs being implemented?
b) To what degree is there a reduction in the percentage of students inappropriately referred to special education?

Methods of evaluation to answer the above questions are listed below, along with the kind of quantitative or qualitative data to be derived. The methods/descriptions of data have been listed in the order of the evaluation questions listed above.

Evaluation Question	Method of evaluation/objective performance measures	Data to be obtained (or already available)
I a. To what degree do differences between pre/post assessments of	Using VT – Developmental	Annually : for each of five

REA students' reading accuracy and comprehension change during REA intervention years as compared to before the intervention?	Reading Assessment (described later) -- at end of Gr. 2 : Comparison of slope (between pre/post assessments before and after the REA intervention)	proficiency levels : % of students performing at that level -Information available from '98, '99, '00, '01 and '02
I b Are there differences among REA sites with regards to the above question?	Comparison of I a. across schools	Same as above, analyzed by school, with attention to school characteristics
I c. What factors do teachers, parents, and administrators identify at the middle and end of the REA project as most supportive of increased student performance, and most challenging? Do these factors vary across sites?	Interviews with teachers, parents and administrators at initiation of project, then at mid-point and completion (by indep. evaluators)	Qualitative data: Primary themes reported within and across groups and sites -- data available in '01 and '02
II a. To what degree do teachers in REA schools report shifts in practices connected to the goals of the REA project, as compared to before the REA intervention and as compared to non REA teachers?	Responses to selected items from Learning Opportunity Surveys completed by classroom teachers (as part of VT's comprehensive assessment system)	Trend data across years ('98, '00, '01, '02)
II b. To what degree does teacher practice, (as reported by teachers) connected to the goals of the REA project vary across sites?	Same as above	Same as above, analyzed by schools/site data available '00, '01, '02
II c. What levels of fidelity to local reading improvement project activities and intensity of tutorial assistance occurred?	Observations in classrooms and interviews with teachers, administrators, tutorial assistance providers, and parents	Summary reports from independent evaluators; '01 and '02
III a. To what degree are high quality family literacy programs	Observations and interviews conducted	Qualitative Trend data across sites

being implemented?	by Independent Evaluator (in relation to characteristics of Even Start model)	and years ('00, '01, '02)
III b. To what degree is there a reduction in the percentage of students inappropriately referred to special education?	Questionnaire given to LEA special education coordinators, SEA technical assistance staff, principals and teachers	Across years and sites, % of students referred and evaluated, and found eligible. Of those referred, judgement concerning appropriateness of referral: inappropriate or appropriate) Data: 00, 01, 02)

B 4. The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.

Every Child a Reader by the end of grade 3". Although it is only within the last two years that President Clinton vocalized this goal on a national basis, the goal was not really a new one for Vermont. In fact, like several other states, Vermont's State Board of Education identified early reading success as one of its key goals in1996.

However, the public's attention was drawn more clearly to this goal in 1997 when, after the state's previous education funding formula was declared unconstitutional by the VT Supreme Court, the VT Legislature passed a controversial but powerful education reform law; the "Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1997. While this piece of legislation, known within VT as "Act 60" is most widely known for its revision of educational funding, the educational reform measures contained in Act 60 have had, and will continue to have for some time, a powerful impact on how education is conducted in the state.

Wisely, the Act 60 legislation paid particular attention to early reading. One key element directed the State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Agency of Human Services, higher education, literacy organizations and others to develop a "plan for establishing a comprehensive system of services for early education in the first three grades to ensure that all students learn to read by the end of third grade". No one assumed that such a plan would be accomplished overnight; neither did any one assume that efforts should wait until kindergarten to begin.

So, in October, 1997, a dynamic, diverse, and highly focused group of over 100 individuals gathered to respond to the directive and to address the critical need: ensuring

that all of Vermont's youngsters would become competent and confident readers by the time they left third grade. This task force – which represented the following invited groups, met for two full days to begin the task.:

    Commisioner of Education
    Lieutenant Governor
    House Education Committee- chair, member
    Senate Education Committee, member
    VT Dept of Education Early Literacy Team (including reading/lang. arts consultant, Even Start consultant, Library-Media consultant, Early Education consultant, special education consultant, Adult Literacy consultant… -- the team also includes others from outside the Dept.)
    VT State Board of Education
    Elementary school principals
    VT School Boards Association
    Private School staff
    Stern Center (private, non-profit center providing professional development and literacy tutoring)
    Private literacy consultants
    Agency of Human Services
    Director, Parent Child Centers
    VT Principals' Association
    Elementary School teachers
    Special Educators
    Superintendent
    Regional/Community Literacy Organizations ("People in Partnership")
    Higher Education (chancellor of state college system)
    Head Start
    "Success by Six" (VT inter-agency early childhood program)
    Title 1 coordinators
    VT Center for the Book
    Libraries
    Curriculum coordinators
    Reading Recovery Teacher-Leaders and teachers
    Senator James Jeffords' office
    VT NEA
    Adult Basic Education Coordinators
    Dept. of Libraries
    Even Start Coordinator
    VT Council on the Humanities
    VT-PTA

A skilled facilitator from another state (the state's Reading consultant) helped us get started, as we reviewed essential elements for early reading success, barriers and challenges that hinder progress, and generated both recommendations and strategies to be undertaken over a five year period. Numerous revisions and refinements took place over a four month span of time, and eventually a plan was approved by the VT State Board of

Education and presented to the Legislature.(Note: During 1998-99 several changes have been made to the original plan, partly in response to recommendations from the National Research Council's Report, <u>Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children</u>). Those changes are still being finalized.

Seventeen recommendations for state-level actions form the heart of the Plan; these recommendations are arranged in four clusters:
     * Expectations, Standards and Assessments
     * Professional Development and Parent Education
     * Learning Opportunities, and
     * Leadership and Partnerships

Each recommendation is supported by more specific strategies to be undertaken. For example, within the "Training for Professionals and Parents"
Cluster, one recommendation specifies" " Ensure that primary-level educators, including administrators, have access to professional development opportunities in the area of reading instruction – including information about explicit teaching of sound-symbol relationships, literature based instruction, parental involvement, and assessment.

Another recommendation in the same cluster reads," Ensure that college faculty continually integrate current research and best practices, including theory and methods, in teacher-training programs. Two strategies being undertaken to implement that recommendation include: a) making sure that the Early Literacy Team, and others, contribute to a review of the state's process of approving teacher education programs, b) convening a colloquium of college faculty in the area of reading education, to disseminate findings from Preventing Reading Difficulties, and to consider implications, and c) making sure that the Early Literacy team and others provide input to revisions of licensure and endorsements in the area of reading.

In the cluster entitled "Leadership and Partnerships", one recommendation calls for an ongoing partnership group – to support implementation of the Early Reading Comprehensive Plan and review/provide guidance to the Governor and the Legislature. This partnership is intended to be meet several times a year, to serve as an advocate for the "plan", and the update the plan every five years. At a recent "review" meeting of key individuals from the original group that drafted the comprehensive plan, the recommendation was made for the core inter-agency Early Literacy Team to convene such a group several times a year to serve this monitoring/advocacy function. This previously established group, then, has been designated to function as the state's "Reading and Literacy Partnership" group by the Commissioner's office, and should be considered as such , even though the group does not include every group identified in section 2253(d).

A final component of the plan is a section entitled "Characteristics of Systems that Support Early Reading". This section of the plan details elements considered essential for enabling all students to read by the end of third grade. Because of its positive history with educational reform, VT is a relatively "reform-friendly" site.

In summary, VT has made a serious commitment to educational reform, with almost a decade of consistency in its goals ("success for all Vermont students; no exceptions, no excuses)" and general strategies (strengthening/aligning standards, instruction and assessments to achieve both equity and excellence). Although there is still some dissatisfaction with the financial aspects of Act 60,VT's educational reform legislation, the educational components have been generally accepted. Because the student performance data from the state's comprehensive assessment system has been widely publicized, Vermonters, in general, recognize the need for systemic reform – particularly in an area as critical as early reading.

Its comprehensive assessment system includes standards-based state assessments, in the area of literacy, at grade 2 (VT-Developmental Reading Assessment), grades 4, 8 and 10 (New Standards English-language Arts Reference exam) as well as writing portfolios (since 1990) at grades 5 and 5. Along with work beginning on a careful review of requirements for both licensure and endorsements, VT is also now poised to begin a major new comprehensive professional development initiative. In addition, the process for review of teacher education programs is under revision. The REA project, as stated earlier, will serve to accelerate our efforts for at risk schools, but also provide a demonstration of what can be done with systemic, intensive efforts based on solid research.

B5 The extent to which the proposed project encourages parent involvement

The State of Vermont has strong resources in this area. Programs throughout the state have created a rich educational support system for parents. Additionally, the Local Education Subgrant Application requires that LEAs describe how interactive literacy activities between parents and their children will be addressed. Specifically, the application requires a description of how training will occur for parents on how to be the primary teachers for their children and full partners in their children's education, parent literacy training that will lead to economic self sufficiency and age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences. Furthermore, the following four groups currently create and promote opportunities throughout Vermont to support parents to be active participants in literacy assisted activities to enhance their children's learning:

 The VT Center for the Book: This organization has created four distinct programs that are based on scientifically based research. The programs were developed by the VT Center for the Book, Vermont Department of Libraries, Vermont Department of Education and a children's literature consultant. These programs are all offered throughout the state of Vermont.

Beginning With Mother Goose has been available to parents throughout Vermont since 1987. This three-session program continues to be conducted by specially trained facilitators working with groups of parents convened by local librarians and social

services professionals. Beginning With Mother Goose gives adults the books, information and activities they need to help babies start their lives as readers. Group discussions promote the exchange of ideas, information and practical application. The books and stories used in Beginning With Mother Goose promote exploration of how books work, and the development of language in babies from birth to three years.

The children's literature collaborators met again to develop a program for the parents of three-five year olds. In 1989 Growing With Mother Goose was in place. This three session program continues to use a specially developed Activity Guide to help parents use books to accomplish two goals: first, to read and talk together about good literature; and second, to use works of literature to help address youngsters' developmental issues such as getting along with others and facing their fears.

The impetus to create the third program, Mother Goose Asks "Why"?, came as the children's literature collaborators were approached by preschool educators who lamented the lack of good home-based informal science programs. A pilot project was developed in 1991 for daycare providers. In 1993, a statewide expansion of the program was funded by the National Science Foundation. This program is a family science program for parents of three-to-seven year olds

In 1995, The VT Center for the Book began to build community capacity by training local professionals to conduct the programs themselves. This way, the Center was able to use its resources more efficiently, while helping day-care providers, Head Start teachers and others integrate the various family-literacy activities into their day-to-day work with children and parents.

Most recently, the Center developed Mother Goose Meets Mother Nature, an environmental education program that helps parents and children learn about the world around them through an Activity Guide and high quality picture books. Funded by the Environmental Protection Agency, this project was developed through collaboration between children's literature experts and environmental educators from the Vermont Institute of Natural Science and Shelburne Farms.

The Vermont Center for the Book continues to develop programs to help parents participate in literacy-related activities with their children. They are in the process of creating "You Can Count on Mother Goose", using a math theme, and "Mother Goose Works It Out", using a conflict-resolution theme.

Vermont Council on the Humanities: The goals of this organization are three fold--people will read and be students of the humanities throughout their lives; every child will be read to from birth onwards; and children will enter school ready to become readers and will leave school as readers. This organization has created four distinct programs that are based on scientifically based research. These programs are all offered throughout the state of Vermont.

The Vermont Council on the Humanities continues to financially support grassroots efforts by parents, teachers, librarians, social service workers, business people, adult education teachers, and literacy volunteers as part of their literacy-building Creating Communities of Readers initiative in eight communities.

The Speakers Bureau programs continues to provide opportunities for parents to come together to learn about a subject and talk with each other about it afterward. This has resulted in strengthening the foundation for a fully literate Vermont.

The Book Discussion Collaborators serve Vermonters with literacy needs by distributing free books to individuals and families. Service providers include social workers, nurses, home visitors, adult basic education teachers, community organizers, Head Start and Even Start teachers, and teachers in correctional facilities, middle schools and high schools.

Through a partnership with the Stern Center for Language and Learning, 100 childcare providers were trained and given books in 1998. In addition, through an arrangement with Vermont's Agency of Human Services, six Americorps members around the state have been trained to deliver the Never Too Early books and information to family childcare providers in their homes next year, specifically targeting those providers with the fewest resources.

Vermont Adult Learning: This organization provides instruction statewide for adults (with a particular focus on parents) in several areas including reading. Adults are provided opportunities to learn to read or improve their current reading skills, join a book group, or take specialized reading classes. This organization's goal is to help adults meet their literacy goals so that they are better able to help their own children at home with reading.

The Vermont Family Literacy Initiative Project: This group is in the process of establishing a consortium composed of providers and policy makers committed to integrating family literacy programming into the existing education and social services systems. The consortium will provide the leadership to broaden and intensify the family literacy dialogue at the state and local levels and determine how to increase the capacity of families, communities, programs, organizations and schools to support intergenerational literacy efforts statewide. In addition, a primary goal of the Initiative is to create the Vermont Family Literacy Model: a continuum of services and programs offering various levels of intensity depending on the needs of the families and the objectives of the service providers. The three phases of the project include the consolidation and training of consortium members, establishing partnerships, collecting data about family literacy programming and adopting/adapting program quality indicators, and developing a family literacy clearinghouse offering information on programming, research, funding and professional support.

The REA project plans to make ample use of the above resources, and, in addition, to develop and demonstrate its own repertoire of complementary strategies. Involvement

by parents needs to take a variety of forms – such as communication with school, home literacy support, advocacy, collaboration, etc. (Epstein, 1988) and needs to be a reciprocal venture. The school is as responsible for creating and cultivating strong parent involvement as the parent. In particular, the close involvement of parents through (and with) the Tutorial Assistance programs and providers should provide a strong model for others to draw upon.

C. Quality of project services .

C1. The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.

Training and professional development services for the VT REA project to be provided by the VT REA project are of several types during each phase of the project:
- Preliminary phase: before granting LEA subgrants:
  - preliminary meeting over VT Interactive Television
- Application Phase
  - 2 day professional development for all administrators and teachers, interested parents
  - two half-days for grant writers
- Project Phase
- within-LEA professional development, and
- Professionally development, available across sites, sponsored by the state's REA project
- Professional development not sponsored by the project, but available to all

All of these forms of professional development are key to spur significant improvements in practice. Throughout the REA project, we will make every effort to be mindful of, and apply research about what makes effective professional development (e.g., research from Sparks, Fullan, Guskey). For example, we will use a variety of forms and types of professional development; we will include active learning as much as possible; and we will address educators' concerns and needs throughout – not just through question/answer sessions, but through assessing background knowledge before sessions, and making connections with concerns/needs previously expressed.

Preliminary phase:
First, preliminary information concerning the availability of REA subgrants and what is involved in applying for them will be shared with LEA teams via a three hour session using the VT Interactive Television system. Since having a common understanding of this information is key to making an informed decision as to whether or not to apply, we plan to urge that LEA teams attending this preliminary session include both district administrators, principals of all eligible schools within the LEA and at least two classroom teachers from each eligible school. There will be ample opportunity at this session for questions and answers, and follow-up will be available through email, phone, and onsite visits by the project manager if needed.

Application Phase:

Following the preliminary meeting, initial professional development and training for eligible, interested LEAs will take place over an intensive two-day meeting. This meeting, most likely, will be held in two locations – one in the northern area of the state, and the other in the southern part. (If all applicants are within a two-hour driving distance, there will be only one training site. Attendance at both days is required for all administrators and staff who teach reading to students. Topics to be included at this meeting will include:

General information about REA:

- an overview of the goals of the VT REA project
- overall design, including evaluation design of the VT REA project
- targets to be pursued by schools: need to focus on all of the components of reading through a *comprehensive* reading improvement program.

Content information

- Information and active learning experiences to strengthen teachers' and administrators' knowledge in key areas of reading (e.g., engagement by teachers in learning sequences designed to strengthen understanding of phonemic awareness, or the importance of fluency.) and program elements (family literacy, elements of effective tutoring), etc. We expect to use in-state expertise for these topics (using resources such as the Stern Center for Language and Literacy for phonemic awareness, staff from Windham County Reads and "star" Even Start program staff for family literacy, staff from the VT Center for the Book and VT Council on the Humanities for reading motivation). In addition, we expect to "import" some out-of-state resources, using the Northeast Regional Lab or EDC to make connections with resources in areas such as programs for at-risk kindergartners. (we'd love to have Benita Blachman, Dorothy Strickland, or Dorothy Fowler as resources, for example)

Selecting and implementing effective reading programs

Another key focus will be explaining and supporting local RIP (reading improvement program) requirements – to use scientifically based research to select and implement highly effective reading programs. IN addition, we will discuss effective strategies for professional development, and ways to use assessment information to adjust instruction. Planners of local RIP subgrants will be encouraged to include a variety of methods of professional development, such as training in specific instructional methods and curricular content, opportunities for teachers to observe skillful instructional practices by other teachers, study groups, and problem-solving sessions.

- Modeling the review of sample research-based programs or components of programs in light of criteria for effective programs. This review might be provided by the publisher of a program, or the reviewer of a program. For example, we might include comprehensive (or near-comprehensive) programs such as Success For All and Open Court.

We might also include a review of several component research-based programs that do not claim to be comprehensive, but have strong potential for at least one aspect of a comprehensive program, and have strong support from research as well. These might include such approaches as Junior Great Books, Reading Recovery, Wilson Reading, the Benchmark Reading Detectives Program, etc. (Note: While the review in Preventing Reading Difficulties concerning research regarding Reading Recovery's effectiveness is not entirely positive, our experience has been that schools that have full and high-quality implementation of Reading Recovery have found it to make a significant and sustaining contribution to a comprehensive reading program, with fewer inappropriate referrals to special education resulting, as well as fewer students reading in the lowest proficiency levels as measured by the statewide assessment.

- Explanation of the review process/criteria recently used by an SEA team to review commercially published programs in light of VT's Framework of standards and learning opportunities. This process yielded, for each program reviewed, a visual display of areas (by specific standards and elements of "evidence") where the program strongly addresses the Framework, moderately addresses the Framework, and where the Program would need to be strongly supplemented in order to address that area of the Framework, moderate al

- Participants will then have an opportunity to apply their learning by using the REA reading program effectiveness criteria to consider additional programs or professional development offerings (these will likely include both strong examples and weaker examples, so that participants can gain experience distinguishing between the two).

Support for LEA Grant Writers
 Two additional sessions -- with one half day before the two day meeting, and one half day after the meeting – will be provided for grant writers, and particularly tailored to the (ideally) two-three person teams from each LEA who will be primarily responsible for writing the subgrant application. At these half-day sessions information and technical assistance will be provided regarding the nuts of bolts of the grant writing process itself. Note: The forms for REA subgrants will all be available electronically, for downloading.

"Coaching" will be available on an as-needed basis, particularly for LEA grant-writers, but also for principals, teachers and others,– both from the REA Project Manager as well as from members of the REA Subcommittee of the VT Reads Reading Literacy Partnership Group. Coaching might take place through on-site visits, through email, phone or VIT sessions if LEA staff request it. (Note: The REA Project Manger will not serve as a reviewer of subgrant applications, so providing technical assistance and professional development will be appropriate)

Project Phase:

This, needless to say, is the most important phase. Even though the LEA has been awarded a subgrant, the first few months will be key, because it is then that some final decisions will be made concerning program elements, and professional development will

likely go in to "high gear". There will be three kinds of professional development to be provided or brokered during this phase:

a) School-based or LEA-based professional development.
IN their applications LEAs will specify the nature, duration and intensity of professional development to be provided throughout the phase. The exact content and methods will differ from site to site, but will likely include training in specific instructional methods and curricular content, opportunities for teachers to observe skillful instructional practices by other teachers, study groups, and problem-solving sessions. In some cases professional development will involve visitations from one REA schools to another school (in the same, or another district or state) that has more experience in implementing the same program or component of a comprehensive reading improvement program.

b) Professional development sponsored by the state's REA project, available across REA sites.
Some sessions will be required of staff at all REA schools; some will be optional, but staff will be strongly encouraged to attend. Required sessions will take place twice annually, and will include:
- updates concerning research findings related to early reading
- "success stories" from particular REA sites
- problem-solving sessions regarding common topics (e.g., building vocabulary, maintaining communication with independent tutorial assistance providers, analyzing assessments to better adjust instruction)
- content sessions regarding topics such as the above.
- In some cases professional development will involve visits by school administrators/staff to each others' schools.

Optional sessions will address topics that are not common to all, but have been either requested by administrators or staff members at participating schools, or topics that have been observed by the project manager or members of the VT Reads REA subcommittee during visitations. For example, sessions might include troubleshooting around very specific topics such as " helping the most at-risk students develop knowledge of sound-symbol correspondence" or "classroom management during literature discussions".

c) Professional development opportunities not sponsored by the state's REA project, but available across sites

Finally, SEA project staff will alert local REA projects as to particularly effective professional development opportunities and resources that are available during the REA project, that might benefit the overall goals of the project. Rather than simply recommending entire conferences or publishers, specific speakers/sessions, books, videos or technological resources will be made. In some cases these opportunities will be available through the state's Regional Reading Resource Centers; in other cases they will be independently offered.

In addition, there are several opportunities for professional development that are regularly sponsored by the SEA. Annually, attendance at half-day update/calibration sessions is expected of all primary-level staff who will be administering the state's early reading assessment, the VT-Developmental Reading Assessment. At this session teachers learn of any changes in the assessment itself, are introduced to common instructional resources, and practice scoring both records of oral reading and retellings according to uniform scoring criteria.

Another opportunity is the annual "Leadership and Literacy" conference, which is held on a Saturday, and co-sponsored by the VT Dept. of Education, VT Association for the Education of Young Children, VT Council on Reading, and VT-ASCD. This conference provides a key opportunity for administrators and teacher-leaders to gain current research-based information and to network. Last year this conference highlighted one of the task force members who authored <u>Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children</u>, Elizabeth Sulzby, as a keynote speaker.

Still another state-sponsored opportunity is the "Instructional Focus Sessions" series that is co-sponsored annually by the VT Dept of Education, the VT Council on Reading and the VT Association for Education of Young Children. The goal of these sessions is to bolster and expand teachers' repertoire of instructional strategies around emergent and early literacy. Last year the sessions centered around four focus topics:

- Focus on the "Hardest To Teach": Adapting Effective Strategies for Students who have unique needs
- Cultivating the "Seeds of Literacy" in preschool programs and with parents
- "Definitely Not Too Early": Building Reading Comprehension- K—grade 2
- "Bridging the Gap": Instructional Strategies to support reading comprehension from grade 2 to grades 3 and 4.

C2. The extent to which the technical assistance services to be provided by the proposed project involve the use of efficient strategies, including the use of technology, as appropriate, and the leveraging of non-project resources.

A wide variety of methods will be used to provide technical assistance to staff in REA project schools. Methods will include professional development during training, technological supports, action-planning assistance, and, as needed, professional development, including coaching, from staff at Vermont's developing Regional Reading Success Centers..

Professional development during training for grant applications will be needs based, active, engaging, and multi-faceted. We plan to survey those who plan to attend before they arrive to get a better sense of their background knowledge as well as their specific needs. Resources to be used during the training come from various partners around the state, including the Stern Center for Language and Learning, the VT Center for the Book, the University of VT, St Michael's College, and several private consultants in areas such as phonological awareness and decoding. We also plan to use resources from the

Comprehensive Center at Andover as well as the Northeast Regional Lab to assist us, particularly in helping school staff differentiate between programs and components that are supported by scientifically based research and those that are not.

Technological support will be used extensively throughout the REA project. To begin with, the REA subgrant materials will all be available electronically. In addition, using distance learning technologies such as Interactive Television will provide opportunities for teachers to conveniently participate in courses, workshops and discussions. Vermont has a system of 12 interactive TV sites geographically distributed around the state so no participants need to travel more than 30-60 minutes to participate. The Vermont Department of Education will work with the Regional Lab at Brown University and the Comprehensive Regional Assistance Center in Newton, MA (EDC) to disseminate scientifically-based information related to reading including findings related to phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, fluency and reading comprehension. This will include both print-based materials and Internet links.

Information will also be available at the Department of Education website. Information will include (but is not limited to) upcoming courses (both credit and non-credit) provided by higher education institutions throughout the state, and seminars/workshops. Internet links to the latest research on reading including findings related to phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, fluency and reading comprehension will also be available. The website will also provide a means of disseminating information about REA projects to the broader public. We also will create a listserv to connect REA teachers throughout the sate so that they may talk about their successes, issues and needs.

Assistance in the annual action planning required by the state is available from the state's five School Improvement coordinators. Most of the schools that will receive REA grants will also be identified as "in need of technical assistance", either in Tier 1 (most in need) or Tier 2 (still with strong needs, but less so than Tier A). The project manager will work closely with the school improvement coordinators to coordinate assistance around action planning so that schools that need extra help receive it in a timely fashion.

- Finally, technical assistance will be available to all REA schools through the Regional Reading Success Centers. These centers are currently being planned to provide key literacy resources in five locales around the state; funding is still pending form VT's legislature at the current time. Many communities throughout the state do not currently have geographic access to high-quality supports for reading success. Research-based professional development, resource banks and consultation for Vermont professionals and parents are sorely needed. All forms of technical assistance provided by the Regional Reading Success Centers will be grounded in solid research.

These centers will have three branches:
- One (branch A) will focus on the general population: providing and disseminating resources to schools, parents, and community groups for early support, teaching and learning from birth-grade eight.

- A second branch (B) will focus on prevention: providing or brokering professional development for early intervention components: e.g., training in kindergarten phonological awareness programs such as Benita Blachman's, Reading Recovery in first grade, Early Intervention in Reading, etc. Training in using early literacy assessments will be part of this branch as well.
- A third branch (C) will focus on providing intensive, wrap-around support to schools that demonstrate significant challenges in meeting state standards for early reading performance. This branch has recently received federal funding from the Office of Special Education, and will begin start-up in 1999-2000. This branch will particularly focus on reducing the percentage of students who are incorrectly or unnecessarily referred for special education evaluations or services. Through this project the state plans to work very closely with higher education across colleges and universities, as well as other providers, to provide multi-year supports to these schools so they can develop a comprehensive program to increase the likelihood of all students succeeding in early reading.

VT's REA project will closely coordinate with the Reading Success Centers in two key ways. First, the resources and professional development available in Branches A and B will also be available to schools participating in local reading improvement projects. Second, there will be clear communication and close coordination to ensure that schools eligible for REA grants have all relevant information about the REA grants so they can make informed choices as to whether or not to apply. Schools that participate in the REA project will not take part in Branch C of the Reading Success Center. which are being planned. At the time of the writing of this grant, funding for these centers is still being considered by the Legislature, but we are confident that they will get off the ground soon.

C 3. The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice.

VT's REA project will use current research as well as the content of local projects themselves.   This use of research will be evident through the training process for potential applicants for REA subgrants as well as through the application. We expect, then, those schools will propose reading improvement programs that:

- include attention to all six key components of reading: phonological and phonemic awareness; decoding, fluency, background knowledge and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension; strategies to construct meaning from print, and motivation to read -- to help children achieve critical accomplishments related to early reading success (such as those listed in "Preventing Reading Difficulties" (1998).
- to the greatest extent possible, select highly effective programs or components of programs that meet the criteria for a) explanation of foundation from research, with a strong theoretical foundation; b) demonstration of effectiveness, using rigorous evaluation models; c) documentation of previous implementation; and d) evidence of replicability
- include the key elements of the REA legislation:

- providing children with the readiness skills they need to learn to read once they enter school
- teaching every child to read
- improving the reading skills of students and the instructional practices for current teachers through the use of findings from scientifically based research
- high-quality family literacy programs
- early literacy interventions to those who are experiencing difficulty in order r to reduce the number of children inappropriately referred to special education.

We expect that some LEAs will propose "comprehensive" programs, such as Success for All, and others will propose "composite" programs which might include some research-supported, published programs which address some , but anot all of the components (e.g., Open Court; Junior Great Books, Wilson Reading, Reading Recovery). In some areas a published program may not be needed as much as extended, high-quality professional development. In either case, schools will be expected to justify the use of any component they select by specifying the research base for the component's theoretical foundation, evaluation data supporting it, as well as implementation and replicability information.

VT's REA program will not provide a "list" of specific reading programs or components that would be strong candidates in terms of efficiency , but we do plan to provide, during training, some examples and non –examples (much like those used in the non-regulatory guidance) , so that LEA staff can more clearly distinguish among components and models well-supported by research and those less supported.

C4. The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project are appropriate to the needs of the intended recipients or beneficiaries of those services.

The services to be provided by the REA will directly meet the needs of the eligible schools and communities and will also meet the policy needs of the SEA. VT needs the resource of REA to further its early reading goals, so that we will no longer have nearly one in four students below our standards for early reading.

For the students who will benefit, the REA project will make a profound difference. Achieving success in reading during the early years is essential; students who need remediation in later years take significantly longer to catch up, if they do at all. Action planning provides an ideal opportunity for schools to analyze student performance data, identify priority areas for improvement, establish performance goals and select programs to reach those goals. Schools are now poised to be in a position of knowing specifically the areas their students need to improve upon and of carefully evaluating whether the adoption/adaptation of a research-based model is the best improvement strategy. The "quality" components of Act 60 thus serve as a blueprint for school improvement. In the area of early reading success, what is needed--and the REA provides--are the content-specific "specs" so that schools, particularly those with many students at risk of early reading difficulty, pursue strategies efficiently and effectively.

In addition, the impact of the REA will be felt beyond the seven- twelve LEAs that will immediately benefit from subgrants. The Reading Excellence Act offers a prime opportunity for State Education Agencies to accelerate efforts to ensure reading success and prevent reading difficulties. In Vermont, we are committed to use the REA to strengthen teachers' clear understanding of standards and expectations in all of the areas of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, fluency, comprehension and motivation); to induce schools' use of research-based instructional programs and participation in research-based professional development; and to prompt better use of assessment information and other indicators to monitor change in students and the implementation of programs and strategies.

C5. The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project involve the collaboration of appropriate partners for maximizing the effectiveness of project services.

Services to be provided by the project involve collaboration among key partners in order to maximize REA project services. In Vermont, collaboration is not just a goal, but a necessity. Key aspects of collaboration will be evident on several levels.

To begin with, collaboration will be fostered by the nature of the REA Reading Improvement application itself. Because the applications require LEA applicants to describe collaboration, for example, between library and reading/literacy programs, and criteria for the collaboration are shared, ahead of time, with LEA staff, this, in and of, itself, will foster an increased degree of collaboration.

The family literacy component of the Local Reading Improvement project clearly require a significant degree of collaboration. Adult Basic Education staff, early childhood providers, and kindergarten staff, and others all need to be involved for a full-fledged family literacy program to exist. Such "full –fledged" family literacy projects are not easy to develop and implement, however.

Within the last year Vermont has requested, and undergone an independent review of its family literacy efforts. From that review two key issues became evident: the need for a state-adopted common definition of family literacy, and the need for a more intentional , well- coordinated approach to family literacy across the state. A number of willing partners are poised ready to support this effort: the Vermont Center for the Book, VT Department of Libraries, Adult Basic Education, VT Association for the Education of Young Children, Head Start, Even Start, and others. Vermont is now in the process of drafting its proposal for federal Family Literacy Initiative funds. Through this resource, plans include using family literacy projects funded by REA as pilot sites. Since the two key individuals drafting the Family Literacy Initiative (the state's Even Start Coordinator and the state's Adult Literacy coordinator, are both members of the SEA's Early Literacy Team -- and part of the REA Subcommittee of VT Reads), close coordination will be greatly facilitated and fostered.

Another key area of collaboration involves the SEA's School Improvement team, who is responsible for technical assistance to schools most in need of improving their student performance results. Most of the schools that will receive REA grants will also be identified as "in need of technical assistance", either in Tier 1 (most in need) or Tier 2 (still with strong needs, but less so than Tier A). The project manager will work closely with the school improvement coordinators to coordinate assistance around action planning so that schools that need extra help receive it in a timely fashion.
First, the REA Subcommittee of VT REA project , by its composition, will foster collaboration. Members of this committee will reflect the perspectives and draw on the expertise of parents, higher education faculty, non-profit professional development providers, early childhood professionals, reading specialists, administrators, family literacy specialists, etc. By using their expertise in selecting the grantees and also through on-site visitations, their viewpoints and expertise will be well used.

D. Adequacy of resources: The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and to the anticipated results and benefits.

The State Department of Education has an existing infrastructure to support the Project Manager and administrative assistant proposed in this project. The Vermont Department of Education Reading Consultant, Dr. Susan Biggam (resume attached), will oversee the project and supervise the Project Manager. Sue is recognized and respected for her knowledge and skill in early reading in Vermont and is often called on to present at national reading conferences such as IRA, the regional affiliate of ASCD, and the National Reading Conference.

The Department of Education workplace, with minor modifications in areas such as phones and workstations, can support these additional staff. The laptop and any supplies will be purchased at the state contract rate which is far lower than retail. The Department of Education is already networked and linked to the Internet through high-speed lines. The salaries of the Project Manager and administrative assistant were estimated based on the State of Vermont Salary schedule. This will ensure that adequate resources are in place to hire qualified staff. All other costs were calculated based on actual experience and have proven to be very accurate.

E. Quality of the management plan: The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan of the proposed project, the Secretary considers how the applicant will ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operation of the proposed project, including those of parents, teachers, the business community, a variety of disciplinary and professional fields, recipients or beneficiaries of services, or others, as appropriate.

Activity Name	Responsibility	1999								2000												2001	2002	2003
		6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12			
Project Startup																							
Notify key parties (State Board, VT Reads Steering Committee, Schools, Public and Potential Tutorial Assistance Providers)																							
Establish regular meetings (3-4 x's year) of VT Reads REA subcommittee			•																				
Hire State REA/RIP manager, REA/TAG manager and Administrative Assistant			•	•																			
Distribute REA Local Reading Improvement Grant Preliminary Information Packets					•																		
Develop training program and materials for LEA teams			•	•																			
Establish grant coordination/communication procedures/system at DOE					•																		
Vermont Interactive Television informational session					•																		
Provide technical assistance (phone, online, fax) to applicants					•																		
Hold 2-day meetings: Training in researched based reading improvement programs and how to complete a REA/RIP application					•																		
Vermont Interactive Television follow-up session							•																
REA/RIP Sub-Grant Review Process																							
Invite Review Team members from VT Reads Steering Committee for REA/RIP grants					•																		
Train Review Team members from VT Reads Steering Committee (1 1/2 days)							•																
Applications due							•																
Review applications								•															
Notify applicants								•															
REA/TAG Sub-Grant Review Process																							
Notify Public			•																				
Invite Review Team members from VT Reads Steering Committee for REA/TAG grants						•																	
Train Review team members from VT Reads Steering Committee (1 day)						•																	
Applications due								•															
Review applications								•															
Notify applicants									•														

Activity Name	Responsibility	Timeline (1999 FQ4 – 2003 FQ4)
Monitoring/Technical Support for REA/RIP Grants		
Hold north/south meeting for start-up technical assistance		Single marker early 2000 (FQ2)
Coordinate with other technical assistance providers (SEA and other) for specific schools		Continuous from early 2000 through 2003
Establish Web pages on DOE Web site		Single marker early 2000
Establish and maintain email networks		Continuous from early 2000 through end 2003
On-site monitoring visits by project manager		Periodic paired markers throughout 2000–2003
On-site monitoring visits by members of VT Reads Steering Committee		Periodic paired markers throughout 2000–2003
Monitoring/Technical Support for REA/TAG Grants		
Hold north/south meeting for start-up technical assistance		Single marker early 2000 (FQ2)
Establish and maintain email networks		Continuous from 2000 through end 2003
On-site monitoring visits by project manager		Periodic paired markers throughout 2000–2003
On-site monitoring visits by members of VT Reads Steering Committee		Periodic paired markers throughout 2000–2002
Evaluation		
Set up database on key outcomes for participating schools		Single marker early 2000
Develop data collection and analysis process		Single marker early 2000
Collect assessment data		Periodic markers 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003
Develop school profiles and reports		Periodic markers 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003
Local REA/RIP Sub-Grant Operations		
Plan, select, do initial professional development		Markers early 2000
Implement		Continuous from 2000 through end 2003
Conduct program evaluation		Periodic markers 2000, 2001, 2002
Conduct ongoing student/statewide assessments		Continuous from 2000 through 2003

Activity Name	Responsibility	1999		2000				2001				2002				2003			
		FQ4	FQ1	FQ2	FQ3	FQ4	FQ1	FQ2	FQ3	FQ4	FQ1	FQ2	FQ3	FQ4	FQ1	FQ2	FQ3	FQ4	FQ1
		6 7 8 9	10 11 12	1 2 3	4 5 6	7 8 9	10 11 12	1 2 3	4 5 6	7 8 9	10 11 12	1 2 3	4 5 6	7 8 9	10 11 12	1 2 3	4 5 6	7 8 9	10 11
Communicate with parents about REA activities/programs			••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••	
Communicate with public (local community) about implementation and results				•••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••••••••	••

A diversity of perspectives will be brought to bear in the operation of VT's REA project, including those of parents, teachers, the business community, a variety of disciplinary and professional fields, recipients or beneficiaries of services, and others. This diversity will be evident in VT's REA project in at least two ways.

First, the participation of the VT Reads (VT's Reading-Literacy Partnership) Steering Committee in all phases of oversight of the project will ensure that a diversity of interests are involved. Most of those interests were present during the development phase of Vermont's comprehensive plan for early reading success(see list below of those who took part in the development of the plan) , and we will make sure that they are all represented on the REA Steering Committee to shape the course of the REA project through at least through reviewing applications and monitoring the progress of the REA projects.

Involved in the development of VT's Comprehensive Plan for Early Reading Success (designated as VT's Reading/Literacy Partnership):

Commissioner of Education
Lieutenant Governor
House Education Committee- chair, member
Senate Education Committee, member
VT Dept of Education Early Literacy Team (including reading/lang. Arts consultant, Even Start consultant, Library-Media consultant, Early Education consultant, special education consultant, Adult Literacy consultant… --team also includes others from outside the Dept.)
VT State Board of Education
Elementary school principals
VT School Boards Association
Private School staffs
Stern Center (private, non-profit center providing professional development and literacy tutoring)
Private literacy consultants
Agency of Human Services
Director, Parent Child Centers

VT Principals' Association
Elementary School teachers
Special Educators
Superintendent
Regional/Community Literacy Organizations ("People in Partnership")
Higher Education (chancellor of state college system)
Head Start
"Success by Six" (VT inter-agency early childhood program)
Title 1 coordinators
VT Center for the Book
Libraries
Curriculum coordinators
Reading Recovery Teacher-Leaders and teachers
Senator James Jeffords' office
VT NEA
Adult Basic Education Coordinators
Dept. of Libraries
Even Start Coordinator
VT Council on the Humanities
VT-PTA

Although business interests were not initially included in the development of VT's comprehensive plan for early reading success, through the VT Business Roundtable, they have since joined recent meetings to update the plan. We will make sure that business interests are adequately represented in the Steering committee, and will also seek to increase the presence of parent interests, particularly those in underrepresented or minority groups.

In addition, local reading improvement subgrants will ensure that a variety of perspectives are involved through their subgrant applications and ongoing monitoring of REA subgrantee activities (See part (b) for the application format and rubrics used for rating subgrant applications.

F. **Quality of project evaluation: The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project.**
    :
(i)   The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible.

The intended outcomes of the REA program, overall, are as follows:
▪ To provide children with the readiness they need to learn to learn to read once they enter school
▪ to teach every child to read by the end of third grade
▪ to improve the reading skills of students, and the instructional practices of teachers/instructional staff, through the use of scientifically based research

- to expand the number of high quality family literacy programs
  to provide early literacy intervention to children who are experiencing reading difficulties, to reduce the number of children who are inappropriately referred to special education

VT's REA project addresses the same goals and has the following specific outcomes:

* Student Performance Outcomes:
1) Accelerating the rate at which eligible schools increase the proportion of students who meet or exceed the standard (for reading accuracy and comprehension), and decrease the percentage of students at the lowest two proficiency levels
* Teacher Practice Outcomes)
2. Increasing the application , by teachers, of instructional practices based on scientifically based research
* School Implementation/Impact Questions
3) Increasing the implementation, by eligible schools, of high quality family literacy programs and
4) Reducing the percentage of students inappropriately referred for special education services

To evaluate the degree to which VT's REA project achieves the above outcomes, the following evaluation questions will be asked of VT's REA project:

    I. Student Performance/Outcomes Data:
    d) To what degree do differences between pre/post assessments of REA students' reading accuracy and comprehension change during REA intervention years as compared to before the intervention?
    e) Are there differences among REA sites with regards to the above question?
    f) What factors do teachers, parents, and administrators identify at the end of the REA project as most supportive of increased student performance, and most challenging? Do these factors vary across sites?

    II. Teacher Practice Questions
    c) To what degree do teachers in REA schools report shifts in practices connected to the goals of the REA project, as compared to before the REA intervention and as compared to statewide data?
    d) To what degree does teacher practice connected to the goals of the REA project vary across sites?
    e) What levels of fidelity to local reading improvement project activities and intensity of tutorial assistance occurred?

    III School Implementation Questions
    c) To what degree are high quality family literacy programs being implemented?
    d) To what degree is there a reduction in the percentage of students inappropriately referred to special education?

Methods of evaluation to answer the above questions are listed below, along with the kind of quantitative or qualitative data to be derived. The methods/descriptions of data have been listed in the order of the evaluation questions listed above. Following this display is a description of the primary instrument to be used in evaluating student performance, the VT-Developmental Reading Assessment.

Evaluation Question	Method of evaluation/objective performance measures	Data to be obtained
I a. To what degree do differences between pre/post assessments of REA students' reading accuracy and comprehension change during REA intervention years as compared to before the intervention?	Using VT DRA (described below) -- at end of Gr. 2 : Comparison of slope (between pre/post assessments before and after the REA intervention)	Annually : for each of five proficiency levels : % of students performing at that level -Information available from 98, 99, 00, 01 and 02
I b Are there differences among REA sites with regards to the above question?	Comparison of I a. across schools	Data, co-varied to adjust for differences among schools - Information available for 98-02, as above
I c. What factors do teachers, parents, and administrators identify at the middle and end of the REA project as most supportive of increased student performance, and most challenging? Do these factors vary across sites?	Interviews with teachers, parents and administrators at initiation of project, then at mid-point and completion (Indep. Evaluators)	Qualitative data: Primary themes resorted within and across groups and sites -- data available in 01 and 02
II a. To what degree do teachers in REA schools report shifts in practices connected to the goals of the REA project, as compared to before the REA intervention and as compared to statewide data?	Responses to selected items from Learning Opportunity Surveys completed by classroom teachers (as part of VT's comprehensive assessment system)	Trend data across years (98, 00, 01, 02)
II b. To what degree does teacher practice, (as reported by teachers) connected to the goals of the REA project vary across sites?	" "	" – analyzed by schools/site data available 00,

		01, 02
II c. What levels of fidelity to local reading improvement project activities and intensity of tutorial assistance occurred?	Observations in classrooms and interviews with teachers, administrators, tutorial assistance providers, and parents	Summary reports from independent evaluators; 01 and 02
III a. To what degree are high quality family literacy programs being implemented?	Observations and interviews conducted by Independent Evaluator (in relation to characteristics of Even Start model)	Qualitative Trend data across sites and years (00, 01, 02)
III b. To what degree is there a reduction in the percentage of students inappropriately referred to special education?	Questionnaire given to LEA special education coordinators, SEA technical assistance staff, principals and teachers	Across years and sites, % of students referred and evaluated, and found eligible. Of those referred, judgement concerning appropriateness of referral: inappropriate or appropriate) Data: 00, 01, 02)

 * **Description of Evaluation instrument: VT Developmental Reading Assessment**

The VT-Developmental Reading Assessment is a standards-based performance assessment, which is individually administered to every VT child at the end of grade two. The assessment, which is audiotaped by teachers) takes approximately 30-40 minutes per child, and is part of the state's comprehensive assessment system.

The VT-DRA yields information about the degree to which students are making progress toward two key standards:
- Standard 1.2: Students reads grade-appropriate text, with at least 90% + accuracy, in a way that makes meaning clear, and
- Standard 1.3: Students understand what they read, demonstrating both initial understanding and personal response to what they read. (The VT-DRA taps only the "initial understanding part of this standard; personal response is assessed through classroom-based assessment.

The VT-DRA reports student performance for individual students, schools, districts, and the state, in five proficiency levels:

- Achieved the standard with honors: Students who read texts at a third grade or higher level of difficulty, with at least 94% reading accuracy, comprehension of what was read, and at least adequate fluency of oral reading.
- Achieved the standard: Students who read text at a late second grade level, with at least 94% accuracy as well as comprehension of what was read
- Nearly achieved the standard: Students who read texts at a late first to mid second grade level of difficulty, with at least 92% accuracy, as well as comprehension of what was read
- Below the standard: Students who read texts at a primer to mid first grade level of difficulty , with at least 90% accuracy, as well as comprehension of what was read
- Limited evidence of proficiency: Students who read texts at a pre-primer level with at least 90% accuracy as well as comprehension, or who responded to familiar print

The VT DRA is significantly modified from the original Developmental Reading Assessment, published by Celebration Press (now part of Pearson publishing), and has a licensing agreement with that publisher. The VT-DRA, using a set of "benchmark books" which increase in difficulty from emergent reading levels (below pre-primer) to the late fourth grade level which have been clustered into five "bands": A1, A2, B, C and D; these bands correspond, in the same order, with the proficiency levels listed above. The goal of each administration of the VT-DRA is to find the highest band at which the child demonstrated both acceptable accuracy and acceptable comprehension.

Assessment procedures differ slightly according to the band being assessed. At the "meets the standard" band (C), the book is introduced, the student reads an introductory section orally (so the teachers can evaluate fluency), and then the child reads the rest of the text silently. The child is then asked to "start at the beginning and tell me that story", while the teachers uses a story-specific scoring guide to evaluate the completeness of the child's retelling. Several follow-up questions are then asked to provide additional opportunities for the child to include key elements of the story. Finally the teachers has the child orally read a specific section of the text while the teacher takes a record of oral reading (to determine oral reading accuracy). To pass that band, the child must demonstrate both acceptable accuracy (94% at band C) as well as acceptable comprehension (all of the key elements of the story included). At band D (exceeds the standard) the student must also read with at least a minimum degree of fluency.

In order to make this assessment appropriate for large-scale, accountability purposes, it has been essential to have uniform scoring procedures and uniform administration of the assessments according to standard guidelines. Nestles to say, to support these guidelines , uniform training of those who administer the assessment has also been essential, as well as a system of monitoring the consistency of both scoring and administration.

Uniform procedures for scoring the record of oral reading have been developed by staff at the VT Dept. of Education, a based on a variety of resources, and were piloted through two feasibility studies. Revisions have been made accordingly.

Uniform scoring guidelines for the comprehension section of the assessment have been developed by a research team at the Univ. of VT, funded by the Northeast Regional Lab at Brown University. Staff at the University of Vermont, over a two year period, parsed the entire set of narrative stories, had expert readers rate their importance to the story, set tentative key elements to be included in a retelling of the story, and then did extensive piloting and revision of the scoring guides using actual students' retellings. In addition, refinements (including a set of "scoring tips") to reduce the degree of teacher judgement needed to score consistently) have been added as a result of research on the baseline year assessment.

To collect information (annually) concerning reliability of the assessment, a statewide random sample of audiotapes is drawn, and these tapes are re-scored by a summer group of highly trained scorers. A comparison is then made, for each student assessed , between the highest band successfully achieved as rated by summer scorers and the highest band as rated by originating teacher-scorers. In 1998 (the baseline year of this statewide assessment) the degree of inter-rater agreement was found to be 76.4 %. While this is an acceptable statistic for performance assessments, our goal is to have at least 80% inter-rater agreement.

(ii)   The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

All of the evaluation methods listed above (see chart) will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving project outcomes. The project manager will ensure that information from each of the data sources will be promptly summarized and disseminated to those who might benefit from the feedback.

In addition, the nature of the student performance assessment itself (the VT Developmental Reading Assessment) is such that it sets the stage for teachers to gather and use relevant information, while at the same time answering the state's questions about students' performance across various contexts. This assessment addresses the accountability agenda of the state (and VT's REA project) while making possible a responsive pedagogy within the classroom. Anecdotal evidence from the first two feasibility studies conducted during the Spring and Fall, 1997 suggest that teachers quickly recognize the need to help students acquire the skills and strategies necessary for success on these longer, more complex texts and tasks, reflecting the well-established phenomenon that "desirable targets" may influence both instruction and performance.

Competitive Priority: Modification of Teacher Certification requirements

The VT Department of Education assures that within 18 months after receiving an REA grant it will modify the state's elementary school teacher certification requirements. The

modification will be undertaken to increase the expectations for teaching reading to reflect recent research regarding the effective teaching of reading, including scientifically based reading research.

Some preparatory work has already been accomplished toward this goal. Standards for beginning teachers have already been revised to align more closely with the INTASC standards. Next steps include moving forward with revisions of licensure requirements for elementary teachers, and there is widespread agreement that a major focus of the upcoming revision needs to address the area of reading. Discussions have been held regarding the advisability of possibly splitting the endorsement for elementary education in VT into two separate endorsements: K-3 and 3-6.

Part IV: Appendices, including

Applicant Response to GEPA Section 427

Steps Vermont will take to ensure equitable access and participation in the Vermont Reading Excellence Act Project:

The Vermont Department of Education is committed to ensuring that all of its programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the public, and that all activities and programs are non-discriminatory in design, application, and performance. The Vermont Department of Education is an Equal Opportunity agency and does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, national origin, gender, age, handicapping condition and/or disability, or sexual orientation.

In implementing this grant, the Department will take the following specific steps to ensure equitable participation:

- Support for local administrators, teachers, parents and students will be offered to all eligible schools/communities in the state. A special effort will take place to reach out to the poorest and most isolated schools and encourage their participation.

- Programs and activities supported by this grant will make extra efforts to mitigate the effects of poverty, rurality, differences based on race, gender or other factors.

- All hiring and compensation will be guided by the procedures established by State of Vermont and Department of Education.

- Extra efforts will be made to encourage independent providers of tutoring who are representative of minorities or diverse populations to contact their LEAs regarding tutorial assistance grants.

- LEAs will also be encouraged to follow the same principles when implementing programs at the local level.

Additional Information – to provide information requested by the REA application:

A. **How was the Reading and Literacy Partnership involved in the development of the State Plan?**

The task force that developed VT's Comprehensive Plan for Early Reading Success, which was approved by the state Board of Education, directly contributed to the development of that plan – through a series of meetings that were held to obtain input, and then by providing feedback to drafts and updates. This previously established group, then, has been designated to function as the state's "Reading and Literacy Partnership" group by the Commissioner's office, and should be considered as such , even though the group does not include every group identified in section 2253(d).

B. **How will the Reading and Literacy Partnership be involved in the selection of local reading improvement subgrantees and tutorial assistance subgrantees?**

Members of the Reading-Literacy Partnership Steering Committee for VT Reads will be the backbone of the group involved in selection of REA Local reading improvement subgrantees and tutorial assistance subgrantees. As soon as the grant is awarded, the steering committee members will be notified and simultaneously invited to participate in the grant review process. Several levels of participation will be available. Steering committee members will be invited to take part in a preliminary meeting to provide advice about the process, which is already designed but could still benefit from input concerning communication methods, etc. will be invited to be a part of the planning process for the subgrant review process. Second, they will be invited to be members of the subgrant review team, taking part in training and actual rating of the subgrant proposals. A final option will be participating as "critical friends" -- sitting in on final deliberations of the subgrant grant selection process, and providing periodic feedback regarding the process and its effectiveness. (Note: Literacy Partnership members would only participate in the last option if they were unable to take part in the actual subgrant review process.

C. **How will the Reading and Literacy Partnership be involved in the oversight and evaluation of subgrantees?**

Reading-Literacy Partnership members who agree to take part in the "VT-REA Review Team" will meet at least three times and will visit at least two REA project schools annually in order to provide close monitoring of REA project actives in the state. This team will work closely with the VT REA manager at the SEA, and will use student performance data along with other program indicators such as teacher surveys to assist them in their oversight function. Their "continuous monitoring" role needs to be distinguished from that of the external evaluator, however. The external evaluator's role is an independent one; the VT REA Review Team, on the other hand, will collect and provide ongoing feedback to schools, LEA staff and SEA personnel. Their role is to help to complete the feedback loop for schools to make continuous progress toward reading improvement for all.

Brief Resume of REA Project Director for Vermont
Susan Carey Biggam
Elementary Reading – Language Arts Consultant
Vermont Department of Education

Education Background:

   1969: B.A., cum laude, Trinity College, Washington, DC
   1970: M.S., Syracuse University, Special Education (specialization in education
   of emotionally disturbed children)
   1998: Ed.D., University of Vermont, Educational Leadership and Policy Planning
   (focus: reading, policy, curriculum) Advisor – Marge Lipson,

Most Recent Positions:

   ❖   Elementary Reading Language Arts Consultant, 1990-99, Vermont
       Department of Education
           - Chair of Vermont Department of Education Early Literacy Team
           - Co-chair of Arts, Language & Literature Framework Committee
           - Co-chair of the Learning Opportunities Committee
   ❖ Public School Approval Coordinator and Development Specialist, 1988-90, VT DOE
       ❖   Title I Regional Coordinator, 1983-88, VT DOE
       ❖   Title I Project Director, 1980-82
   ❖ Adjunct Professor, University of Vermont

Presentations:

   1999: International Reading Association – Microworkshop on "Linking
   Standards and Students: Using Literacy/Communication Profiles K-4"
   1998: ASCD Northeast Affiliates Conference – Session on Large-Scale
   Modification of the Developmental Reading Assessment
   1998: New England Reading Association – Session on VT-DRA
   1997: National Reading Conference – Session on Dissertation topic
   1996: National Reading Conference – Symposium
   1995: International Reading Association Symposium

Publications:

   Articles in: No Quick Fix , (Allington & Cunningham, eds.) International
                  Reading Association
                  Portfolios: Promise or Peril (Calfee & Perfumo, eds.) Erlbaum